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Curtis Flickinger, '20, Left Desk Job to Pursue More Fulfilling Career in Healthcare

Before the Coronavirus pandemic began, 2020 was designated as the “Year of the Nurse.” The declaration by the World Health Assembly celebrates the 200th anniversary of the birth of Florence Nightingale, the founder of nursing. Further, the American Nurses Association, which traditionally observes National Nurses Week May 6-12, has expanded the recognition to the entire month of May.

While the Gardner-Webb University Hunt School of Nursing recognizes the excellence of its students, faculty and staff on a daily basis, National Nurses Month is a time to highlight their dedication and commitment to the profession. One of those students is Curtis Flickinger, a student who graduates this year from the Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (ABSN) program.

Flickinger shares why he left a career in business to enter the nursing profession.

Q: What characteristics of Gardner-Webb’s accelerated nursing program appealed to you?

Flickinger: I wanted to utilize my previous bachelor’s degree in order to expedite the schooling time to receive my BSN. Gardner-Webb was the first university listed on my Google search of N.C. schools that had an ABSN program. I dug a little deeper into researching Gardner-Webb’s values and reputation, and I knew that it was a beneficial



choice to apply here. After touring the campus prior to getting accepted, I felt 'at-home' already with Gardner-Webb. The nursing faculty have been a tremendous support system throughout this rigorous journey of becoming a nurse. I felt that the resources available in the Hunt School of Nursing, as well as the endless support from staff made this experience well worth the endeavor. I was recently offered an RN position at Duke University Hospital upon graduating, so I truly value the education I have received from Gardner-Webb to allow me to reach this achievement.

Q: When did you decide you wanted to be a nurse?

Flickinger: After working a desk job for several years upon graduating with my first degree in business, I realized that I needed a career that was more fulfilling. I always had an interest in healthcare and decided now was the time in life to make that change. I wanted to make a difference in people's lives through the healthcare setting. Nurses are on the frontline of patient care, and I want to be that person the patient remembers directly. My strong sense of empathy and compassion led me to choose this career.

Q: How are your nursing professors and GWU classes preparing you for the job?

Flickinger: The simulations in lab and relative real-life experience of the professors are helping nursing students realize and envision what it's like to be a nurse. They challenge us appropriately in order to get our minds into thinking like nurses.

Q: How have your classes changed since social distancing began?

Flickinger: Classes have moved to live Zoom sessions, which have been just as helpful as in-class learning. We are able to re-watch recorded lectures, which is very helpful. The professors are working hard to make sure we continue to have access to the learning materials we need to be successful. However, I do miss the traditional classroom setting as we approach our last semester of nursing school. But if there is anything I've learned about nursing, it's having the ability to adapt to change.

Q: What have you learned about healthcare from experiencing the pandemic?

Flickinger: I've learned that healthcare is a continuous adaptation to change. Working in the Emergency Room as a CNA II during this pandemic has shown me the flexibility needed to be a healthcare worker. New and challenging obstacles are going to arise every day, so it takes a flexible employee to be an integral part of the team.

Q: In thinking about 2020 as the Year of the Nurse, what are your thoughts about the profession you are preparing to enter?

Flickinger: I am very proud to become a nurse in this ever-changing world. The year of the nurse, especially during this pandemic, has shown what nurses have to endure on a daily basis and the dedication needed to survive in this profession. They are frontline caregivers who deserve recognition for all that they do. I am ecstatic about entering this new phase in life of becoming a professional that will undoubtedly make a difference in people's lives.

Learn more about the Hunt School of Nursing.