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Office of University
Communications

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Karely Chavez-Callejas, '21, Seeks Degree in Healthcare Management



When Karely Chavez-Callejas, of Hickory, N.C., graduates from Gardner-Webb University in 2021, she will fulfill a dream for herself and her parents, who arrived in America from Mexico 20 years ago. They were looking for a better life for themselves and their future children. Karely will be the first in her family to earn a bachelor's degree.

“They left everything they knew behind and came here seeking opportunities to work,” she reflected. “At the time their living conditions were not the greatest, and they decided to take a leap of faith and come here.”

A healthcare management major, Karely received a Presidential Scholarship from Gardner-Webb as well as the Director's Choice award. She is in the Honors Program and a member of the Model United Nations Team. She shares what it's like to be a first generation college student and what she values most about Gardner-Webb.

Q: When did you decide to be the first in your family to go to college?

Karely: I knew from a very young age. My parents expected that of me, and I made it a goal of mine to live up to that expectation. My parents' hard work and sacrifice have kept me motivated to never give up, to accomplish all that I want in life and to become someone that I can be proud of.

Q: How did you and your parents work to make it happen?

Karely: I worked hard, because I had the disadvantage of not knowing any English when I started school. My parents knew very little English, but they would always do what they could to help me. I remember my father staying up with me to finish my reading comprehension homework in elementary school. We sat at the kitchen table for hours with a Spanish-English dictionary as we tried to figure out what certain words meant. I have been fortunate enough to have both of my parents' support throughout my life, and I will forever be grateful for their support. They have been there for me at performances, competitions, sports events and much more. I have always enjoyed school and made every effort to get good grades. I always went above and beyond what was expected of me in assignments and tasks that I set out to do. I did what I could to stand out so that I could achieve my goals. My parents made sure that I was on the right track in school and made sure I was heading in the right direction with my life choices as well.

Q: Why did you choose Gardner-Webb and how did you decide on your major?

Karely: I enjoy the small campus environment. Gardner-Webb made me feel welcome from the very first time I visited. I instantly felt at home. I have always been interested in doing something in the healthcare field, but business administration and management was also something that interested me, so I decided to major in healthcare management to get a mixture of the two things that interested me.

Q: What do you value most about your Gardner-Webb experience?

Karely: I value the close relationships that I have made since I have been here. I have become close to my professors and feel comfortable asking for help even if it does not involve our class. My professors have helped me with finding internships. I have also made meaningful connections and friendships with other students at Gardner-Webb.

Q: What have you learned at Gardner-Webb that you feel will help you on the job or in graduate school?

Karely: One of the most important things Gardner-Webb has taught me is how to advocate for myself. Our professors make themselves available to us, but we have to be the ones that seek help. They create an environment where we feel safe to ask for help and to ask questions when we are unsure of something.

[Learn more about healthcare management and other majors in the Godbold School of Business.](#)