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### **Army ROTC Gives Gardner-Webb Nursing Student Structure She Needed to Excel**

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# Army ROTC Gives Gardner-Webb Nursing Student Structure She Needed to Excel

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Office of University  
Communications

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## Larri Robinson, '20, Prepares for Active Duty in the Military

After researching her interests and spending time on the job with her mother who works in healthcare, Lareshia “Larri” Robinson, of Hendersonville, N.C., chose nursing as her career path. She enrolled in Gardner-Webb University’s Hunt School of Nursing for three main reasons: The program accepts freshmen, she received a scholarship, and the campus felt like home.

However, her first semester at GWU, she encountered a problem that most students don’t complain about—too much free time. “I was used to being a year-round athlete, not having any down time, just go, go, go,” Robinson explained. “I got here and I was sitting in my dorm room, thinking, ‘I have four hours to waste, just today.’ I didn’t have a cohesive bond with people and didn’t have the structure in my life that I was used to having.”

She had some interest in the military, so she decided to talk to Capt. Michael Meissner, director of the Army ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) and senior military science instructor at GWU. “He invited me to come and do PT (physical training) with the group,” Robinson shared. “I joined them and realized that ROTC at Gardner-Webb is a family. We are super close. We don’t just see each other three times a week at 6 a.m. We spend the majority of our week hanging out with each other.”

In her sophomore year, she applied and was offered a ROTC Scholarship. When she graduates in May with her Bachelor of Science in Nursing, she will be commissioned as a



second lieutenant and fulfill her contract to serve four years of active duty in the military. “There’s a team, a family, a bond that can’t be broken when you find your niche and the military is my niche,” Robinson described. “I didn’t want my parents to pay for college. My mother was diagnosed with cancer the middle of my freshman year. My brother was also getting ready to go to college. I wanted to put myself through college. Everybody is like family in ROTC and that really brought me out of my shell. I was a total introvert. The Army has taught me how to talk to people, how to utilize my resources and to become an overall leader.”

After receiving her Associate Degree in Nursing in May 2019, she participated in the ROTC’s Nursing Summer Training Program (NSTP), a requirement for all nursing cadets. “It’s a glimpse into your future,” Robinson noted. “During NSTP at Walter Reed Medical Center (Bethesda, Md.), I spent approximately 136 hours, mostly in the surgical intensive care unit but also rotated to medical-surgical and the pediatric floor. I was able to learn the expectations and the realities of being an active duty Army nurse.”

While she was there, she also had an opportunity to be a guardian for an honor flight of veterans, who came to Washington, D.C., to see their memorials. “They get assigned a one-on-one for the day, because they need extra help,” she related. “That entire day really solidified in my mind that I am doing what I am meant to do. Walking up to the wall with a Vietnam veteran – I don’t even have the words to put into perspective the emotion behind it and the pride you feel to be able to say that this happened and he was a part of it. He wanted me to walk up to the wall with him, because he knows I’m the future of it.”



*Founded in 1916, ROTC—which stands for Reserve Officer Training Corps—is a college program offered at over 1,700 colleges and universities across the United States. In exchange for a paid college education and a guaranteed post-college career, cadets commit to serve in the military after graduation. [Learn more about Gardner-Webb’s ROTC program.](#)*