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Office of University
Communications

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Assistance Made College Education a Reality for GWU Alumnus, Dr. Mamadi Corra

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—The Noel Center for Disability Resources at Gardner-Webb University had its beginnings in 1977 with one program offered for the deaf. Two years later, college officials expanded services to students who were blind and visually impaired.

“Nell Kilpatrick was hired to lead the program, which is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year,” said Cheryl Potter, associate dean of the Noel Center. “She secured a \$250,000 grant from the Kate B. Reynolds Health Care Trust to purchase the equipment needed.”

The services were initiated several years before colleges were mandated to provide them, noted Sharon Jennings, director from 1986 to 2003. “Gardner-Webb wasn’t forced to do it, and that made it a good place to be,” she added. “The professors were very accommodating. They had to get their tests in early to have them brailled.”

Before personal computers and other technological advances, all of the tests were brailled by hand. Each semester, a volunteer, Alice Price, translated thousands of pages from math textbooks into braille. Several GWU work study students served as readers for the blind and visually impaired.

Graduates of the Blind and Visually Impaired Program are employed in various vocations, including lawyers, professors, computer programmers, accountants, school teachers and ministers. A notable graduate is Dr. Mamadi Corra, professor of sociology at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina. Originally from Gambia, West Africa, Corra came to Gardner-Webb from the Georgia Academy for the Blind in Macon, Ga. He received his



Dr. Mamadi Corra earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees from Gardner-Webb, and received his doctorate from the University of South Carolina at Columbia. He is a professor at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina.

bachelor's in sociology and business administration in 1993, and earned his Master of Business Administration from GWU in 1995. He completed his doctorate at the University of South Carolina at Columbia.

“Without the program and its dedicated staff, I am not sure what my prospects for a college education would have been,” Corra affirmed. “And most definitely without the efforts of Sharon Jennings, then program director, to help solicit financial assistance to bring me to GWU and keep me there, I would not have made it there. The program, Gardner-Webb and the overall GWU community made college a reality for me.”

Gardner-Webb gave him a foundation for success. “Suffice it to say that the solid academic background I received at Gardner-Webb continues to serve me well in my professional career,” Corra related. “Moreover, the moral and ethical compass embodied in our motto ‘Pro Deo et Humanitate’ (For God and Humanity) continues to be a guiding principle.”

[Learn more about the Noel Center for Disability Resources.](#)

Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university. Gardner-Webb emphasizes a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics to prepare students to become effective leaders within the global community. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.



One of the first computers made available to blind and visually impaired students read text to them.