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From Spain to the South—students study abroad at GWU



Spanish international students, Sophia Buchó (left) and Irene Carretero (right) study at Gardner-Webb for the fall semester. Photo by Isaiah Johnson.

By: Sthefany Flores

International students Sophia Buchó and Irene Carretero are studying at Gardner-Webb for the fall semester to meet the requirements for their education majors in their home school, Universidad de León in Spain.

"[The United States] is a total different world from Europe," said Buchó. "It certainly gave us both a culture shock."

"In Spain, there's less space between homes," said Buchó. "It's strange to drive on your highways and only see trees in the background." Carretero nodded in agreement to Buchó's assessment and added, "Everything here is bigger too, and the food is very different from Spain. Not just the sizing but also the type of foods. We're not very used to fast foods of America."

In addition to the roads and foods, Buchó and Carretero are taking the opportunity to take a few athletic classes at Gardner-Webb.

Carretero has played volleyball for years, but she said that she enjoys the opportunity to try a variety of sports. She has taken advantage of the fact that the athletic courts at Gardner-Webb are accessible to all students without an additional cost unlike her school in Spain. "Here we are free to use the courts as we see fit, and that's quite amazing," said Carretero. "Gardner-Webb is like an athlete's paradise to us."

As international students and native Spanish speakers, they face a variety of challenges including the language barrier, but they maintain a positive attitude toward the experience.

"I'm so thankful for the close knit environment that Gardner-Webb provides. We recognize people everywhere, and even our professors know us by name," said Buchó. "The hospitality that the campus has shown us gives us a sense of security."

Buchó and Carrereto plan to explore America in the time that they have been allotted. They have a trip to Disney World planned for their Fall Break, and they hope to see New York, the Grand Canyon and Yellowstone National Park during their time in the United States.

"Every day here is like an adventure," said Carretero. "I wake up in the mornings, and I don't know what I will experience and I love that."