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2-27-2018

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#### Recommended Citation

Office of University Communications and Snyder, Chelsea, "GWU Classes, Online Student Publication and Internships Prepared Alumna for Journalism Career" (2018). *Gardner-Webb NewsCenter Archive*. 465.  
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# GWU Classes, Online Student Publication and Internships Prepared Alumna for Journalism Career

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Office of University  
Communications

February 27, 2018

*Jennifer Ortiz '15 Writes and Edits Content for News Radio Station in Washington, D.C.*

## By Chelsea Sydnor '18 Intern for Communications

A Gardner-Webb University alumna has found a way to combine her lifelong love of reading and writing into a career in journalism.

Jennifer Ortiz '15 had the opportunity to prepare for the field by writing and editing for GWU-Today, Gardner-Webb's student-run online news publication. According to Ortiz, this experience was beneficial to her because many aspects of journalism and other media careers must be learned by doing.


Her skills really came into practice when she completed an internship for Street Sense, a street newspaper in Washington, D.C.

"It was an incredible semester full of challenges and learning about journalism from a completely refreshing angle," she said.


Working at a street newspaper, in which some content is produced and the papers sold by individuals experiencing homelessness and poverty, was an inspiring experience for Ortiz. "It provides economic opportunity for and elevates the voice of those who are often forgotten," she said. "It's beautiful to see that these individuals have an avenue where their talents are valued. They're no different than any of us. We're all literally one life-changing event away from homelessness or poverty."

Since graduating, Ortiz has moved back to Washington, D.C., first to complete a writing fellowship at Washingtonian Magazine as a fact-checker. She is now a digital writer and editor at Washington's Top News (WTOP), a 24-hour news radio station. She writes and edits news, and helps manage web content.

"I don't work the normal 9 to 5, [which] makes it an even more exciting job," she said. "I'm so happy to be working and growing there."



Jennifer Ortiz works as a digital writer and editor at Washington's Top News (WTOP), a 24-hour news radio station.



Jennifer Ortiz poses with Dr. Joseph Webb after graduation in 2015. Webb helped Ortiz get her internship.

One of Ortiz's greatest influences at GWU was Dr. Joseph Webb, professor of Communication Studies. "He was my mentor, who took me under his wing and motivated me to do so many cool things during my years at Gardner-Webb," she said.

Jennifer Ortiz, left, interviewed Sarah Currie in 2015 when she became Dean of Students. Currie now serves as GWU vice president for Student Development.

It was Webb who encouraged Ortiz to apply for her Washington internship and guided her during the process. "I wouldn't even be in D.C. right now if it weren't for Dr. Webb," she said.

According to Ortiz, GWU's Department of Communication and New Media urges students to pursue internships and areas where they can directly practice the skills they learn in the classroom. "That proved beneficial for my professional development," she said.

Meanwhile, Ortiz's other interests were shaped by the course Religion and Culture in a Global Perspective, taught by Dr. Don Berry, professor of Religious Studies. "He taught about religions I knew very little about in a way that didn't portray them as ridiculous or absurd, but just as plausible as my own faith," she said. "It was in that class that I grew an inkling that I might want to further study religion in some way."

Ortiz is now studying religion and public life in America at the Newseum Institute's Religious Freedom Center in Washington, D.C. In the future, she would like to write and report on religion and race, as well as about identity. However, she wants to be prepared for anything. "As much as I can plan things, life takes many twists and turns," she said. "I'd rather stay open for any and all opportunities that may come."