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### **GWU Classes Developed Alumna's Skills as a Mathematician and Educator**

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# GWU Classes Developed Alumna's Skills as a Mathematician and Educator

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Office of University  
Communications

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## *Chasity McCraw '17 Teaches Students to Approach Math as a Giant Puzzle*

Working algebraic equations intimidates some students, but Chasity McCraw, a 2017 alumna of Gardner-Webb University, teaches that math is nothing to fear. McCraw was a teenager when she learned how to solve for  $x$  and  $y$ .

Chasity McCraw

“As soon as I saw the challenges and the giant puzzle that is mathematics, I knew I wanted to share my excitement for the subject,” reflected McCraw, who lives in Shelby, N.C. “Seeing some people dislike and dismiss math as being ‘too hard’ or requiring a ‘math brain’ only fueled my passion. My goal became to show that mathematics is approachable to everyone.”

After graduating, McCraw was hired to teach high school math at Thomas Jefferson Classical Academy in Rutherford County, N.C. She has around 90 students and teaches Math II Statistics and Pre-calculus. She loves teaching. “My favorite experience has been bonding with the students and working through challenging problems as a team,” she shared.

She developed confidence in her skills, because GWU professors motivated students to take their understanding to a deeper level. “I was encouraged to explore more of the ‘why’ math works rather than the ‘how,’” McCraw assessed. “This is tremendously helpful when teaching material to students for the first time. By introducing a subject with the ‘why,’ students are more invested in the ‘how’ and have a better understanding of the concept as a whole. Also, my classroom management course was a great resource for helping me think about the everyday classroom life and how I wanted to run my classes and show compassion towards my students in my own way.”

McCraw also learned and practiced a variety of teaching techniques. “In Statistics, we taught problems to one another, teacher-style,” she described. “In Geometry, we sat together and discussed the material while noting the key concepts. In Foundations of Higher Mathematics, we drilled vocabulary and performed formal proofs. In Calculus, we expanded our learning to the 3D plane.”

The best advice she received was not to become discouraged if her students didn't understand new material right away. "I often blamed myself if a student I tutored failed or they didn't immediately comprehend my explanation," she revealed. "While student teaching, I experienced that self-blame tenfold. Fortunately, I realized the most important thing was to keep trying and adapting to the students themselves, showing them more perspectives if they are struggling."

McCraw experienced the same support and encouragement from the professors in the Gardner-Webb Department of Mathematics. "All of my professors had a passion for what they were teaching and truly desired to share that passion with their students," she praised. "They also got to know me and would offer me opportunities to enhance my skills as a mathematician and a teacher. These opportunities started as tutoring jobs on and off campus and grew into jobs at local schools. One such opportunity is one of the main reasons that I am actively teaching at a terrific school today."