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Lauren Hamilton '17 Appreciates Professors Who Pushed her to Succeed

On Lauren Hamilton's first day of student teaching, the lesson she prepared fell flat. The children in the class didn't pay attention or participate. To get back on track, Hamilton ('17) remembered the advice of her professors at Gardner-Webb University. "You can choose to get discouraged and give up, or you can choose to learn, be inspired, and move forward. I chose to reflect and redirect," Hamilton offered. "After that, there was never really a time when I felt that happen again. I learned so much from that one lesson and grew so much. When I look back, I see the growth I have made as a teacher, and it's absolutely tremendous."

A native and resident of Hendersonville, N.C., Hamilton knew about GWU, because her extended family members had graduated from there, several from the Hunt School of Nursing. "I originally came to GWU for its nursing program," Hamilton revealed. "However, not more than a few weeks into my first semester, I knew that nursing was not my calling. I had always wanted to be a teacher, but had been a bit skeptical, because people kept talking me out of education for various reasons—money, regulations, etc."

Ultimately, she asked herself the question, "Where do I want to see myself in 20 years and what do I value most?" The answer was teaching in elementary school. "I wanted to serve God and children and make a difference while doing it," Hamilton affirmed.

The University's commitment to Christian values, both inside and outside of class, gave her additional inspiration. "It is easy for a lot of teachers, and especially Christian teachers, to become discouraged in the school systems today," Hamilton reflected. "Many of them feel defeated and tied down. Gardner-Webb embraced Jesus within the classroom, and I learned ways to embody love and kindness in my own classroom. I also felt encouraged to be surrounded by those with similar values. I met so many amazing people along my journey."

While all of the GWU professors in the School of Education were instrumental in helping her develop as a confident educator, her student-teaching supervisor, Dr. Anita Sanders, had the most influence. When a full-time position opened up at the school where Hamilton was student teaching, Sanders encouraged her to accept the job. "She was my biggest

supporter, but she was tough on me and expected my very best each week of my student teaching,” Hamilton offered. “She always had faith in me, and I thank her for pushing me as far as she did. I graduated with a job offer from the school where I completed my student teaching. I left Gardner-Webb knowing how to develop differentiated units, concept-based instruction, and relevant assessments.”