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### **GWU Alumna Serves as Sign Language Interpreter While Researching Bilingual Education**

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# GWU Alumna Serves as Sign Language Interpreter While Researching Bilingual Education

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Office of University  
Communications

March 15, 2017

## *Jessica Carter '13 Appreciates Professors who Gave her Foundation to Succeed*

Jessica Carter '13 had a comfortable corporate job for six years that she left to fulfill a dream to be a first generation college

photo of Jessica Carter on campus

graduate and study American Sign Language. She was content in her job until she met a group of deaf people and remembered the joy she had as a child learning sign language to communicate with deaf children in her school. As she spent more time with them, she realized she needed to follow her dreams. "These people were such a gift to bring back to my life something that had fizzled out," she recalled. "It was a hobby and fun social activity as a child, and as an adult, it is such a passion, calling and career."

She started researching colleges that offered American Sign Language (ASL) programs, and Gardner-Webb University was one of three she decided to visit. She was filled with apprehension, because she was the first person in her family to go to college, she would be responsible for the bill, and she was in her early 20s. "After the visit, I got a call from admissions talking me through my decision-making process and about the people who could, and later would, be my suitemates for my freshman year," she related. "I knew the studies would fit my needs, and once I knew the people would fit them as well, I packed up and headed to North Carolina."

Since graduating from Gardner-Webb, Carter has worked as an ASL-English interpreter in the Boston, Mass., area and is a graduate student of applied linguistics at the University of Massachusetts Boston. Her focus is in bilingual education/Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). "The foundation that I received at GWU in Deaf culture, ASL skills, and in-depth knowledge of various aspects of linguistics has been invaluable in my career, graduate school admission, and success in learning and research," Carter reflected. "That foundation coupled with the personal growth and spiritual exploration that I experienced at GWU has made me the professional that I am as I continue my journey and answer His calling. My understanding of Christianity and how I live as a Christian was sparked by classroom, faculty, and peer influence of the Boiling Springs community."

Carter's ASL professors from Gardner-Webb have kept in touch, providing referrals, recommendations and input on her graduate research project. "Dr. Mary High, Professor Bob Moore and former professor Lynn Dey have given me their personal cultural

perspectives on the fundamental research, provided me with further resources for research and spent time with me on video calls to provide linguistic feedback,” Carter shared.

She wrote an article about her research, “Linguistic Flexibility: Success Decoded in K-12 Sign Language Interpreting.” and it was published by Street Leverage, a national organization that is the leader in professional workshops for continued interpreter education. “The article takes the general bilingual education approach and applies it to ASL-English interpreting as a profession and the ways in which it can benefit Deaf/hard of hearing students in K-12 education,” Carter explained. “I have gotten such positive feedback from my GWU professors mentioning their excitement and pride in this article, as well as comments from colleagues.”



Jessica Carter poses at graduation  
with GWU American Sign Language  
Professors, Bob Moore and Dr.  
Mary High.