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### **GWU Liberal Arts Education Prepared Alumna for Ministry in a Variety of Settings**

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# GWU Liberal Arts Education Prepared Alumna for Ministry in a Variety of Settings

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Office of University  
Communications

January 3, 2017

*Christina Whitehouse-Suggs '99 has Served as a Pastor, Administrator and Interpreter for the Deaf*



When she graduated from Gardner-Webb University with a degree in American Sign Language (ASL) and theatre arts, Christina Whitehouse-Suggs '99 was ready to tackle whatever situation came her way. "Every single one of my classes prepared me for my career, since interpreters are called to be generalists in an age of specialists," she explained. "Interpreters need to be 'renaissance people' who know a little bit about everything with the ability to use critical thinking and split-second application in highly contextual environments."

She worked as an ASL interpreter while she and her husband, Matthew Suggs, earned Master of Divinity degrees. They were ordained, and both served as pastors. Then she was offered a position as the first associate coordinator for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of South Carolina (CBFSC). After serving over four years in that role, she went back to full-time, private practice interpreting and co-pastored a South Carolina church with her husband.

In 2014, the couple moved to Washington, D.C., and she went to work as an ASL interpreter for the federal government. Her job also includes



coordinating programs and presenting reports and briefings. In her free time, Whitehouse-Suggs continues to officiate weddings, visit churches as a guest preacher, interpret in a private capacity mostly for concerts and plays and perform in community theatre and fundraisers.

She is grateful for the ASL professors at Gardner-Webb who gave her encouragement and guidance that led to a deeper understanding of the Deaf culture, and the theatre professor who introduced "layers of theatre, acting, and directing that have influenced my entire life," she observed. "I still utilize techniques he taught me when I am preaching, acting, or interpreting."

Her GWU art professor opened her eyes to the beauty of architecture, design, and art interpretation, and in political science class, she developed a better understanding of world events. A math professor finally helped her to make sense of math problems. “Her patience and good humor were the only things that saw me through statistics,” Whitehouse-Suggs asserted. “I currently work with large batches of data and create reports that frequently reference principles I learned in her classes.”

A native of Miami, Fla., Whitehouse-Suggs transferred to GWU never having visited the campus. She chose the University based on admission materials and conversations with the dean of admissions. “Honestly, I stumbled on Gardner-Webb, and it ended up being the perfect fit for me,” she reflected. “Gardner-Webb provides a robust liberal arts education in a beautiful setting with faculty that genuinely care about your future success. The skills you learn and the relationships you cultivate will prepare you well for whatever path you choose in life.”