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Format of GWU Nursing Program Helps Student Pursue Graduate Degree

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Debbie Brendley ('18) of Greensboro, N.C., comes from a family of proud and patriotic naval veterans. “Learning the words to the Star-Spangled Banner was required,” she asserted. “My father, grandfather and great-grandfather served in the U.S. Navy.”

A student in the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program at Gardner-Webb University, Brendley is a nurse in the Navy Reserves. She always thought she would enlist after college, but her plans changed when she fell in love and decided to get married. “However, there still was a fire in me to serve,” Brendley offered. “The Lord knew this, and in my first position I met a nurse who told me that I could become a reservist and serve.”

In the 20 years since she joined, she has had four deployments. Her last one was to the NATO Role 3 Combat Hospital in Kandahar, Afghanistan. Veteran's Day has always been special to her, because of her family's service. “I am thankful that America, as a nation, respects and honors those who have served,” Brendley reflected. “But I also know that there are so many who have given way more than I have and I am grateful for them.”

As a reservist, she is committed to drilling at the reserve center one weekend a month, but because of her positions does some type of Navy work every day. As the Assistant Medical Surgical Nursing Specialty Leader for Navy Reserve Nurses, she works with the specialty leaders from Reserve and Active Duty components to ensure that the over 400 medical surgical nurses in the Navy Reserves are ready for deployment. She is also the Medical Surgical Nursing representative on the Nurse Executive Committee, which is the group that sets practice standards for nursing competency and performance across naval service.

The format of the Gardner-Webb DNP program fits her busy schedule, which also includes teaching at a community college. “I appreciate how the DNP program is designed for people who have careers, families and numerous other responsibilities besides being a student,” Brendley praised. “One thing that stands out about the program is that it is a hybrid program. It is online, which allows me to stay in my life back in Greensboro, yet it brings me to campus for the intensive week, which allows me to get grounded in the courses as well as bond with my cohort. I am so thankful for having such great classmates

to work with. I also love how my courses have had areas for sharing prayer requests and how some professors have started classes with prayer and devotionals.”

Because she has worked with skilled graduates of the GWU Hunt School of Nursing, she realizes her courses will prepare her for whatever comes in the future. “This degree will also help me to advance in my naval career and give me an edge at the interdisciplinary table,” she affirmed. “I appreciate the quality of the education I have received and know that learning how to identify problems, research solutions and implement changes that lead to improved outcomes will benefit my practice no matter where I go.”