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### **GWU Degree Completion Program Helps Student Explore Criminal Justice Field**

Office of University Communications

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# GWU Degree Completion Program Helps Student Explore Criminal Justice Field

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Office of University  
Communications

May 31, 2016

## *Courtney McClure ('16) Makes Connections, Gains Experience Through Internships*

Courtney McClure ('16) of Cramerton, N.C., doesn't remember the name of the person who first introduced her to Gardner-Webb University. She was only in elementary school, but she never forgot the name of the college and the school colors.

"We were sitting on a classroom floor and people from different colleges came in and introduced their college," she recalled. "I remember loving the black and red colors of Gardner-Webb. Years later when I began to look into colleges to finish out my degree, I looked there first. I knew the school was Christian-based and sent professors out to work with those who have busy lifestyles."

McClure contacted the University and met with Kelly Collum, former advisor in the Degree Completion Program and now an undergraduate academic advisor. Collum explained how the program offers traditional undergraduate classes at a more convenient time and location for working adults. "They understand the obstacles faced by those who are not fresh out of high school," McClure observed. "The best decision I have made for myself was going back to school and choosing Gardner-Webb. I do not have one complaint about the school."

She found the coursework in the online classes to be manageable and the professors easily accessible. "My professor always got back to me quickly if something came up," she assessed. "They typically set their syllabus up with due dates and an exact outline, so you know what is coming up and can work a little ahead if needed. It works great for those who stay busy."

McClure was also encouraged by the faculty's Christian example. "There is no experience quite like your professor coming in and beginning the semester with a prayer," she affirmed. "I truly believe if I would have stopped and said to Ray Hardee (a professor I had), 'I need you to pray for me,' he would have stopped and prayed right then. I have also had professors that add prayer requests to discussion boards. To me this brought the whole class together and makes you feel as if you're there working as a team."

Human services was McClure's first choice for a major, but after looking at her transcript, Collum told her she could double major in criminal justice in the same amount of time. "She said to try out criminal justice and if I didn't like it I wouldn't have to double major," McClure shared. "I listened to her—one of the best decisions of my life. God led me to her. I fell so in love with criminal justice. I love hearing the stories people tell you and their thoughts behind what they did. They're some of the most interesting stories I have ever heard. Some of the trials you hear about that last for weeks are like a book you can't put down."

Collum and Homer Craig, GWU Criminal Justice Coordinator and Instructor, also advised McClure about internships. "I chose to do two criminal justice internships at the courthouse because of their suggestions," she asserted. "It is hard to get a position at the courthouse, but now I know many people in upper positions who are willing to help me succeed. I have learned so much through my internship experiences, and I have made connections that will last a lifetime."

She continued, "I am ready to storm the criminal justice field with confidence. Kelly Collum and Homer Craig laid the foundation for my career. It would have taken me years to get where I am now without the internships and guidance Gardner-Webb provided. Because of their advice, I am at a place in life I wouldn't have imagined I would ever be."