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Office of University
Communications

May 9, 2016

Karen Taylor ('16) Builds Confidence, Ready to Begin Next Phase of her Education

Gardner-Webb University adjunct professor Karen Taylor ('16) of Rutherfordton, N.C., aspired to take her teaching ability to the next level. She accomplished her goals through the GWU Master of Arts in English online program. Not only did she improve her own writing and lecturing skills, but she learned new ideas for helping students.

Taylor teaches Freshman Composition at Gardner-Webb and is also an English instructor at Isothermal Community College in Spindale, N.C., where she teaches Developmental Reading and English.

The GWU program taught her how to write in varied rhetorical situations, not just traditional ink and paper. "In today's world, that is a valuable skill to have with all of the social media marketing, blogs and web pages," she offered. "The traditional rhetoric class afforded me the chance to improve my public speaking skills, but also to properly compose a speech. It is also very helpful to learn the traditional rhetoric rules, because they help me in my teaching."

Through the online format, professors encourage discussions with everyone in the cohort and offer quick and helpful responses. "I have formed a bond with the people in my cohort that will last," she related.

The English faculty also helped Taylor prepare a presentation for academic conferences. Her paper was well-received by educators and won the top award for graduate research at the Life of the Scholar (LOTS) Multidisciplinary Conference at Gardner-Webb. The presentation examined how to engage students by using their interest in pop culture, specifically hip-hop music and the television show, Empire.

"Due to the excellent instruction I received from Gardner-Webb, I was able to create and present at conferences with some confidence," Taylor affirmed. "Many colleges and universities don't provide help on those kinds of things. That is why Gardner-Webb is a

level up. I did LOTS to thank the faculty for the help I had received. I didn't know there were awards for the graduate-level presentations. I was shocked when my name was called."

Taylor also earned her Bachelor of Arts in English with a concentration in creative writing at Gardner-Webb. She developed a deep respect for the program, which is another reason she came back for her master's. "Gardner-Webb is current on the discourse of the field," she assessed. "I decided to get my master's, because I wanted to teach at a university, and a bachelor's degree is not enough. I decided to continue to study for my doctorate for the same reason. Even though a master's is acceptable for teaching at some universities, I wanted to continue to study for my PhD, because I love learning and I would like to know more."