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Office of University
Communications

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Alyssa Gutierrez ('14) Experienced Academic, Spiritual and Social Growth

In high school, Alyssa Gutierrez ('14) wanted to be a journalist, but a teacher warned her the newspaper business was dying.

"I knew I still wanted to stay in the same realm, so I did some research into public relations," Gutierrez shared. "I came to find out that it was the perfect combination of media relations, writing, human interaction and networking. Public relations is what I was called to do."

After graduating with her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Communication Studies from Gardner-Webb University, Gutierrez completed her Master of Arts in Communication from East Carolina University (ECU). She lives in Raleigh, N.C., and is director of communications for the Better Business Bureau serving Eastern North Carolina.

Gutierrez, who went to high school in Raleigh, was introduced to Gardner-Webb when softball recruiters approached her about playing on the team. Because of her career interests, the offer to play hinged on academics. She met with Dr. Bob Carey, chair of the Department of Communication & New Media, and realized the program would be a perfect fit. After spending time on campus, she discovered something else even more important.

"Getting a first-class education and playing collegiate athletics was amazing, but the relationships that I built with friends and mentors from Gardner-Webb is something that will never be broken or lost," she observed. "I am lucky that I got to build such genuine relationships. I know a lot of people who attended other universities, and they are shocked at the fact that I still talk to people from Gardner-Webb."

The close-knit community also eased her fears about not being from a Protestant background. "As a Catholic, I was initially worried there would be some sort of stigma—that Catholics and Baptists or Christians of other denominations would not be able to see eye-to-eye, but it was the opposite," she elaborated. "Everyone was open and accepting of everyone else and that was incredible to see. I grew tremendously in my faith."

Working on her bachelor's degree developed the skills she needed to excel in graduate school at ECU. "I was prepared in terms of knowledge, but also in the aspect of academic rigor," she assessed. "Reading hard texts or having a long paper was not a shock to me, because I had been doing that for the past four years."

Outside of her major area, a Western Civilization class with Dr. David Yelton, professor of history, shaped her work ethic. "Not only did he teach us about these historic civilizations, but his teaching approach taught me how to work hard and over-prepare," she explained. "That also led to my success in graduate school and in my career."

Gutierrez also appreciated the mentorship of Dr. Lisa Luedeman, instructor of communication studies. "She is one of the most giving professors I have ever come in contact with," she assessed. "She was available day and night and would give up anything to help her students. I am lucky to have been one of her pupils, and Gardner-Webb is lucky to have her."