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GWU Degree Completion Program Prepares Student for Career Change

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Office of University
Communications

February 24, 2016

Sam Ali ('16) Answering God's Call to become a Physician Assistant

Taking a step of faith, Sam Ali ('16) left a successful job at a non-profit organization to complete his bachelor's degree at Gardner-Webb University.

"I had spent many years working in the non-profit sector with at-risk youth in Greenville, S.C.," Ali shared. "It was time to move in a different direction. I took some time off, prayed about it, and felt God's calling to finish my degree and afterward, pursue becoming a physician assistant."

He was familiar with the Gardner-Webb campus, because he used to visit regularly with some close friends who were in school there. As he learned more about the University's Degree Completion Program (DCP), he realized it fit his situation perfectly.

"From the admissions process through financial planning and student accounts, everyone I spoke to on the phone and everyone I met in person made me feel like Gardner-Webb was the right choice for me," he observed. "I guess you can call it divine intervention. My experience has been most enjoyable. I will graduate with a bachelor's degree, and I cannot be more thrilled. It has been a long, difficult journey finishing my degree, but I was helped and encouraged by the DCP teachers and staff."

While completing his degree, Ali worked 30-plus hours a week as an anesthesia technician at a Greenville hospital. He also found time to give back to the community by volunteering with Habitat for Humanity and Hands of Kindness Children's Ministry to help gain sponsorships and funding to build a water tank and start a dormitory for children in Uganda. Because of his service to the community, he was a finalist for the Caudill Service Learning Award, which is voted on and given by the Service Learning Advisory Council, and recognizes the student who had the most outstanding service learning class project from any major graduating during the academic year.

The ability to take classes online helped him manage his commitments to work, community service and school. "Once you find that balance and get a routine down, it becomes easier," he explained. "I loved the organization of my online classes and was able

to set up my schedule the way I needed in order to be successful. Having the flexibility of online classes with professors who are there to help you succeed and understand the real-world balancing act of school and work made all the difference.”

He focused his studies on business administration and healthcare management. “I wanted to learn more about being a better leader, and I pursued a concentration in healthcare management, because of my future career goals,” he related. “I wanted a more in-depth knowledge about the healthcare system. The faculty emphasized real-world applications such as management, diversity, and global topics. This helped me see a bigger picture of healthcare.”

He continued, “I’m thankful to Gardner-Webb for the opportunity to pursue, reach, and accomplish a goal that at one point seemed extremely difficult to do. I’m going forward with the confidence of finishing this goal and making a difference in society through my future pursuits.”