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Office of University
Communications

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Ashanti McPhee ('15) Discovered Interest in the Profession After Coming to GWU to Play Football

When Ashanti McPhee came to Gardner-Webb University to play football, he never expected he would discover his career in nursing. Through a curriculum that broadly exposed him to a variety of subjects, he uncovered an interest in the profession and an opportunity to help others.

McPhee initially thought he wanted to pursue a degree and career in marine biology, but a general biology course helped him realize it was the human body that fascinated him enough to pursue further studies.

“I believe Gardner-Webb’s rounded curriculum is a good way for new students who are on the fence about careers to really see where their interests are,” McPhee related. “It is OK to make changes in your major. College is all about experiences and learning who we are through those experiences.”

After uncovering the possibility of being a nurse, staff and faculty in the Hunt School of Nursing encouraged McPhee, from the admission process to the graduation stage. He credits the counselor who helped him see the long-term benefit of the rigorous nursing program, the office staff member whose door was always open for support, and the faculty members who helped ensure he had all the tools to be successful in the classroom while also competing on the football field.

“Nursing is a very rigorous and stressful major, and playing football allowed me to get away from the books and focus on something that I loved since I was a child,” shared McPhee, who played center and other positions on the offensive line at GWU. “My coaches always understood my situation as a student-athlete and offered assistance when I needed it, and my teammates were a huge support group for me as well. I believe that being an athlete enhanced my experience at Gardner-Webb, through those mentors and friends.”

Following his completion of the associate’s degree in nursing, McPhee went on to receive his Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) through online studies. After graduation, he moved to Atlanta, where he works in the neuroscience progressive care unit at Northside

Hospital. His focus is on helping with the prevention and treatment of disorders that impact the brain and spinal cord following traumatic events.

McPhee sees connections between his time on the football field and his time in nursing, such as the need to think critically and quickly while playing the sport and when helping patients. He hopes his experiences, as a nurse and as a former collegiate athlete, will help him encourage other young men who have an interest in his profession.

“There seems to be an increasing demand for male nurses,” he connected. “I guess because of my size, it’s easier for me to help lift and ambulate patients. I want to try to help other guys who might be interested in nursing but are shy about it or scared to be ridiculed.”

He hopes to offer the kind of support he found as a student-athlete at Gardner-Webb. “What really separates Gardner-Webb from other universities is the family-like environment it offers,” McPhee explained. “Having that one-on-one experience with professors and staff allowed me to get the attention I needed to become successful.”