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Office of University
Communications

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Wendy Riley ('17) Left Healthcare Management to Become a PA

Wendy Riley drives three hours each day to attend the Physician Assistant Studies program at Gardner-Webb University, because she knows she's receiving a quality education from caring professionals.

"The Christ-centered focus has a welcoming feeling and my sense is that the faculty wants us to learn, and grow, and succeed — not because they want to check the box that says X percent of positions filled, X percent graduation rate, or X percent pass rate on the boards (although I know that is the goal)," she stated. "You don't feel like a number here. You feel like a person who wants to go out into the world and make a difference in the lives of others. This program fosters that desire. I think that sets this program apart from others."

An X-Ray technologist for more than 25 years, Riley obtained her undergraduate and master's degrees from Pfeiffer University while working full-time. She spent the last 15 years of her career in healthcare management, but had a desire to go back to patient care.

"I considered PA school, but at the time I was a single parent working 50 hours a week and that was not possible," Riley explained. "I was laid off and saw that as an opportunity to follow my dream of PA. When God closes one door, he opens another, right?"

Because her children were well-established in their school, she looked for a program in North Carolina. She applied to one other school besides Gardner-Webb, but a visit to the GWU campus helped make her decision about where to attend.

"When I came to Gardner-Webb PA program's open house, I knew this was where I wanted to be," she shared. "The campus was beautiful, the students were respectful in how they carried themselves and interacted with others, and the faculty was so caring and warm."

The didactic portion is fast-paced, but the faculty helps students succeed, she said.

"The faculty are top-notch. I have been very impressed with the caliber of education and instruction," she observed. "To top it off, they care about each student — care that we learn what we need and that we have the tools necessary. They always have an open door and an

open heart.”