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### **Gardner-Webb Student Appreciates Caring and Approachable Faculty**

Office of University Communications

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# Gardner-Webb Student Appreciates Caring and Approachable Faculty

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Office of University  
Communications

January 5, 2016

## *Kristina Nork ('16) Experiences Individual and Professional Growth*

When she graduates from Gardner-Webb University in May, Kristina Nork will have more than a certificate to hang on the wall. She will carry with her all the life lessons she's gained as a student, an athlete and a follower of Christ.

"Being at Gardner-Webb has helped shaped me into the person I am today through my experiences in the pool, the classroom and the strong Christian atmosphere," she shared. "I am encouraged to decide what I believe to be true and have learned to defend my opinions while relying on truth and my knowledge to back me up. Putting all aspects of life together at Gardner-Webb, I am fully convinced that I am prepared to be successful in life because of the impact the people and programs at Gardner-Webb have had on me."

A native of Parkland, Fla., Nork came to Gardner-Webb because she was looking for a NCAA Division I swimming program at a Christian university. From the first visit, she had a feeling Gardner-Webb was the right choice.

"The time I spent with the swim team, other students, and professors helped seal the deal, because I knew that I was going to be a part of the family that is Gardner-Webb," she recalled.

Nork has participated in sports since she was a small child, playing soccer when she was 6 and participating in swim and basketball camps when she was 8. As she got older, she developed a passion for helping others achieve their goals. With her degree in exercise science, she plans to attend graduate school and work on her master's in sports administration.

"My intent with an exercise science degree is to make my way into the coaching, strength and conditioning world to help athletes be the best they can be, both in and out of their sport," she noted. "Being able to see the happiness in people when they see improvements in their health, fitness, or their sport, no matter their skill level, is a feeling that I love having. Knowing that I could have a small part in the joy in someone's life because of the knowledge I have attained through my exercise science degree is something that I look forward to experiencing regularly."

While learning technical skills in her exercise science classes, she's also had opportunities to develop life skills.

"The ability I have to meet and connect with a wide variety of people from my peers, to faculty, to special guests at Gardner-Webb has helped me not only to improve my interpersonal skills, but also network and build relationships for the future," she observed. "Gardner-Webb gives me opportunities to talk with professionals on how to fine-tune my resume and interview skills, as well as help me find the best internship and job opportunities that are most interesting to me and relate to my major."

And Gardner-Webb's liberal arts emphasis challenged her to think differently about the world around her. "Topics, such as the foundations of economics, effective public speaking, or what events shaped the world into how it is today, impact how I approach different situations and really have helped me to have an open mind while talking with others and in creating my own opinions," she explained.

Faculty in the School of Preventive and Rehabilitative Health Sciences have been a constant source of encouragement to her and others. Nork describes the atmosphere in the classroom as family-like, where students are allowed to talk about class assignments along with events happening in the world and in their lives.

"They teach class material, but heavily emphasize being able to transfer this information to real life, which I think is most important," she affirmed. "Class discussions occur daily, which I think is rare, especially in science classes. They also encourage us to conceptually understand topics. The faculty helps us to be our best by pushing us to figure out hard problems on our own, but are always there to correct, explain, and work with us on subjects, even if it's not a class they teach themselves."

Nork also appreciates being able to approach her professors and Gardner-Webb staff members with questions or just to chat. Some who stand out to her are Dr. Heather Hudson, Dean of the School of Preventive and Rehabilitative Health Sciences; Neal Payne, Associate Minister to the University for Student Ministries; Chief of University Police Barry Johnson, and Dr. Delores "Dee" Hunt, Vice President of Student Development.

"Here, professors are concerned with the well-being of their students. I cannot count the number of times I have walked into dean Hudson's office to talk, or I've seen somebody like Chief, Neal Payne, or Dr. Hunt walking around campus and was able to have a casual conversation with them, because they take the time to talk with and remember each student," she praised. "I definitely would not have gotten through without the faculty in the School of Preventive and Rehabilitative Health Sciences. Their understanding, willingness to talk and give advice at any moment—and stay after hours—has truly been a blessing that I will take with me once I leave Gardner-Webb."