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### **GWU Alum Offers Insight on Living & Working in Mumbai, India**

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# GWU Alum Offers Insight on Living & Working in Mumbai, India

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Office of University Communications

April 8, 2014

## *Doctor of Education Graduate Serves as Principal Overseas*

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Gardner-Webb University Doctor of Education alum Josh Bishop knew a job overseas would offer him invaluable experience as both an educator and administrator. When he served as a principal within the Charlotte-Mecklenburg (N.C.) school system, he didn't know how quickly his dream would become a reality. Two years ago, Bishop and his wife, Rachel, moved their family 8,300 miles from the Carolinas to Mumbai, India where he works as assistant principal for the American School of Bombay. GWU's Office of University Communications recently caught up with Bishop to find out more about how his education at Gardner-Webb helped him land the post of a lifetime.

Full name: Joshua David Bishop

Josh, Rachel, Peyton, & Ava enjoy an elephant ride in India.

Hometown: Charlotte, N.C.

Education: Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education (Millersville University of Pennsylvania); Master of Arts in School Administration (Edinboro University of Pennsylvania); Doctor of Education in School Administration (Gardner-Webb University)

Family Info: Rachel Morris Bishop (wife); son Peyton (5); daughter Ava (4)

### **GWU: How did you become a GWU student?**

JB: I initially learned of GWU through Dr. Doug Eury (dean of the GWU School of Education). Dr. Eury spoke to me on many occasions about joining the doctoral program, which was a cohort that met at the Charlotte campus. I completed my coursework for my Ed. D. in School Administration in June 2012 and am writing my dissertation.

### **GWU: Did you always know that you wanted to work internationally?**

JB: When I was a principal in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, a colleague of mine accepted a job with the Department of Defense as a principal in South Korea. This was my spark! Over the next three years, I began to look into international schools and began the process of

applying for vacancies. In October of 2012, I was interviewing with the American School of Bombay. After several Skype interviews, my wife and I were flown to Mumbai, India for our final interview. In late November, I was offered a job with the school and accepted.

An artist paints mend hi on Ava's hand.

### **GWU: Where do you live and work in India?**

JB: Currently, we live in Mumbai, India (population between 18-21 million people). We live in a complex comprised of teachers and administrators from the school, along with other expats and Indians.

### **GWU: What sort of work do you do?**

JB: This year, I am the assistant principal of the high school and will be the principal of the high school next year. The positions are very similar to U.S. positions. Each international school is different. Some schools follow an American style of education, others follow a European style and still others follow specific countries. The majority of schools, American School of Bombay included, follow the International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculum. As I started the process of applying at schools, I began to focus on two important factors: it had to be a great school (one where I wanted my children to attend) and it had to be the right fit for both the school and me.

Rachel & Ava at a Sanja Gandhi National Park budha.

### **GWU: How has your education at GWU equipped you for success in your current post?**

JB: GWU's doctoral preparation has been instrumental in providing the foundation and application of material. I do wish I had learned more about the many systems of education around the world. As a principal, even in the U.S., you will encounter students coming from these other systems and knowing more about them would allow me the opportunity to better meet their needs. There is a lot of value to knowing about and "borrowing" some of the great things that other educational systems use.

### **GWU: How important is learning a second language in India?**

JB: As this is an American School, English is the language spoken. We do offer ESL (English as Second Language) classes for our students who may not be fluent. As students enroll, they are given the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) to see if they meet our requirements for admission. As an expat, the vast majority of Indians speak English. There are a few instances where a translator is needed, but there are always people around who are willing to assist.

**GWU: Can you offer some notable similarities and differences with regard to the schools in India?**

JB: Because we are an American School, most things are very similar to what you would see in the U.S. A few of the commonalities are as follows: students in fifth through ninth grades are administered tests for formative analysis; our curriculum follows standards which are based on the Common Core; we typically follow the same calendar; and we use some of the same current research including Grant Wiggins, John Hattie, Ken O'Connor, Suzie Boss, etc.

The Bishop family at the Taj Mahal.

**GWU: Have you had an opportunity to tour the country? What have you learned about the culture?**

JB: We have had several opportunities to tour/visit India since our arrival in July. To date we have spent time in the Kerala region, which is southern India, New Delhi, and Agra (the city of the the Taj Mahal). The Indian culture is very welcoming. People are almost always smiling and willing to help.

**GWU: What is your advice to GWU students who may have an opportunity to live/work internationally?**

JB: If they are truly interested in teaching abroad, they need to start the process early. There are several recruitment firms that cater to International educators such as Search Associates and International Schools Services. Both, Search Associates and International Schools Services require a payment in order to access their database of posted vacancies and their job fairs and this is where the majority of hiring is done. The hiring process runs from November through March for the upcoming school year. The one piece of advice I would offer is to keep your options open. In other words, don't count a school out because it is in a country that you had not considered. Many schools offer comparable salaries, housing and airfare home in the summer so keep your options open.

**GWU: What are your future plans?**

JB: Typically, contracts are awarded for two years. Originally, I signed a two-year contract and because of the new role next year, I have signed on for an additional three years. That would make our stay here at least four years. We will reevaluate our plans at that time.

**GWU: How valuable has this experience been for you?**

JB: Overall, we have been very pleased with the country and the opportunities that we have been exposed to as a family. To date, I would say that this has been the most rewarding experience both personally and professionally.

*Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University blends a liberal arts core curriculum with more than 55 major and minor professional programs of study, a comprehensive academic experience that flows from our Christian commitment to intellectual freedom, service and leadership.*