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Through GWU, Student Connects to Community, Gains Experience in her Field

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ACADEMICS

Through GWU, Student Connects to Community, Gains Experience in her Field

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON OCTOBER 9, 2020



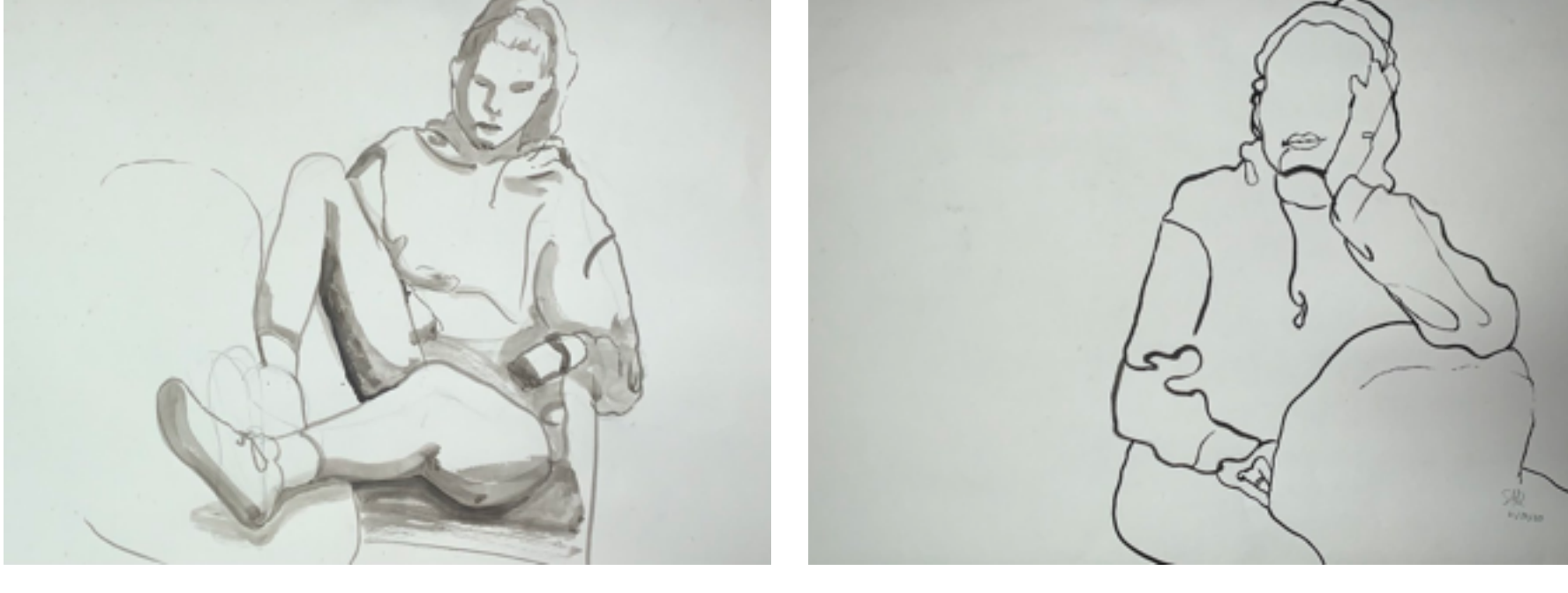
Sarah Allison Rochester, '20, Experiences Hands-on Opportunities in Art and Museum Studies

Through faculty and staff at Gardner-Webb University, Sarah Allison Rochester, '20, developed partnerships that were integral to her studies. A senior, Rochester enriched her academic experience by participating in several activities.

“Connections are a vital resource for young adults going into the real world and through Gardner-Webb, I have been to many places,” noted Rochester, a senior majoring in art with a minor in museum studies. “For example, I went to New York with the art department where I was able to see the artwork of the masters I studied in class.”

On that trip in 2017, Rochester saw “Starry Night” by Van Gogh at the Museum of Modern Art. “Before seeing it in person, I respected the piece and the artist, but I thought it was really overdone and hyped up,” Rochester related. “However, when I saw it in person, I truly understood the skill level and genius it would take to create a piece like that especially during Van Gogh’s lifetime. I felt like what I was learning in my classes finally clicked together.”

She enjoys drawing portraits, and her senior show is a portrait series in ink. Despite growing up in an artistic family and being drawn to the arts, Rochester wasn’t sure about her career choice until Gardner-Webb added the museum studies minor. “I decided to try it out, I knew I had found the direction I wanted to go in,” she asserted. “I am very lucky and grateful that I get to combine two of my passions in such a field of study.”



▲ Sarah Rochester is working on her senior show, a portrait series in ink.

“I have grown so much during my years at Gardner-Webb both in my personal and academic life.”

Sarah Rochester, '20

Additionally, Rochester met local professionals who offered hands-on opportunities. “Gardner-Webb is the reason I obtained my current job/internship at the Cleveland County Arts Council (Shelby, N.C.), and how I have been able to visit other institutions like Discovery Place (Charlotte, N.C.), Earl Scruggs Center (Shelby), and Kings Mountain (N.C.) Historical Museum and learn under/work with individuals who have experience in the career I’ve chosen,” she affirmed. “In all my classes, I have been trained in the areas that I hope to work in one day. Having the actual experience in the field has prepared me the most. For example, the internships I’ve done and the exhibit I was able to create with my classmates for our museum studies practicum really showed me what my career will be like and what the expectations are.”

At the Arts Council, Rochester helped with the curation of exhibits and other day-to-day tasks. “I helped take down and install two exhibits, which requires organizing the artworks as well as creating a database for the artworks and artists,” she explained. “I also help create other databases to keep important information organized, file documents, communicate with participating artists and patrons, facilitate the sale of artwork, and assist with community events. I learned it takes initiative, communication skills, and problem solving to be successful in this field. I really enjoy working at the Arts Council, because I’m surrounded by the things I love and am passionate about. I work and interact with people in my community, which helps me feel connected and like I am making an impact.”

Arts Council President Shearra Miller said Rochester has been a huge help during the unusual circumstances related to COVID-19. “She is learning about the back office side of life, like seeing what it takes to pull together an art exhibit and the not-so-exciting responsibilities of gallery/arts council work,” Miller observed.

Rochester grew up in Boiling Springs and chose to attend GWU to be near her family. “The small, private, beautiful campus and community made me feel very welcome,” she described. “I have grown so much during my years at Gardner-Webb both in my personal and academic life. This has been the perfect place for me to develop my sense of self and to enrich my education. I have been blessed with knowledge, experiences, and friendships that I wouldn’t trade for anything.”

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We welcome your suggestions and feedback, contact:

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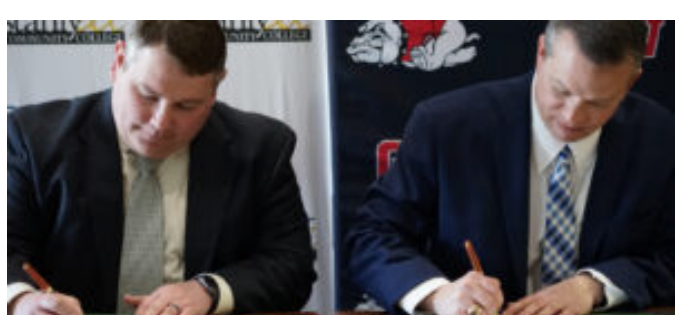


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