

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SERVICES

Gardner-Webb Celebrates Record Year for International Students

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON SEPTEMBER 7, 2022



Students Share Why GWU Was Their Choice

From the small island of Curacao to the large country of Canada and 44 other lands across the globe, a record number of 108 international students have made Gardner-Webb their college home this year. While many of these students will be away from their home country for several months, and even have to rely on others for transportation needs, Gardner-Webb is fast becoming their new home.

Recently, a group of eight international students gathered to talk about why they attend GWU. All of them shared that a recommendation from a friend or family member affected their decision.

The pull to attend GWU was so strong for **Savannah Ward**, of Hong Kong, that she came without actually stepping foot on campus. Her decision was made after an interview and a virtual tour. “I fell in love with the atmosphere, the campus and most importantly, the people,” she asserted. “I felt so welcomed and so at home, which was the ultimate reason that I chose to come to Gardner-Webb. Also, for the fact that they have a very good biology program.”

Ward is a sophomore pursuing the biomedical science concentration. Originally from Cape Town, South Africa, she has also lived in South Korea. Her dad, who had been coming to the United States to minister, told her about a Christian university in Boiling Springs. “I love that there are so many outdoor places to go, and it’s so peaceful to just walk around or sit outside by the lake,” she described. “I thought that I would have trouble making friends, but I made friends before classes even started. I really love the faculty, because they are invested in the lives of their students. I am also thankful to be at a campus where I can openly profess my faith and meet with others to talk more about Jesus.”



- ▲ Tina Earls, coordinator of International Student Services and Principal Designated School Official (PDSO), talks to a group of students in the International Student Lounge.

Cathal “Randy” Butler, of Ireland, also decided to investigate Gardner-Webb because of a recommendation. A member of the men’s tennis team, Butler is studying international business. When he began looking at schools in America, a GWU alumna introduced him to Head Coach Mike Griffith. “It’s a small tennis community in Ireland, and everyone knows everyone,” shared Butler, a junior. “I ended up coming here and absolutely loved it. You meet a new person, and you are going to see them the next day. I remember my first night walking in to the Snack Shop. My first time in America, and they treat you like family. Everywhere you go it’s the same; they go out of their way to be nice.”

He also likes the team’s camaraderie. “We are all brothers and our coach is a great leader, a great man,” Butler affirmed. “Our coach would do anything for us. We work hard and we have fun.”

Klara Ovefelt of Stockholm, Sweden, is a member of the women’s soccer team. She discovered Gardner-Webb through an agency. “I had a really good feeling and they also had a Swedish girl here a couple years ago,” she related. “I talked with her, and I just got such a good impression.”

Ovefelt only planned to stay at Gardner-Webb for one year, but “I just realized that I love this life. It’s so much more than just soccer,” she asserted. “The best part is the people—100 percent. Like I love soccer here. I’ve never had so much fun, but I’ve also met people here that I think I’m going to like for the rest of my life.”

Lorenzo Bartolini, of Italy, plays on the men’s soccer team, but that’s only part of the reason he chose GWU. He was looking for a master’s program in strength and conditioning and discovered Gardner-Webb’s. He was impressed with the courses offered and what people said about the program and decided to attend.

Jinwon Suh, of South Korea, is a freshman who was recruited to play soccer. He plans to major in exercise science. “I liked how they focus on the players to develop themselves,” he said. “I thought this

place will help me become a better player. I thought it was really a quiet place and fresh air, good views. I will really need a car to drive.”



▲ Eloisa Puello Cabeza, of Cartagena, Colombia, (second from right) came to GWU last year as a Fulbright scholar and served as a Spanish teaching assistant. This semester she is back at Gardner-Webb as a graduate student enrolled in the school counseling master's program.

Connor Enslin of Australia is a senior economics/finance major and a member of the tennis team. He heard about Gardner-Webb from a student-athlete in Australia, who had come to America to play tennis at another college. The guy told him about playing Gardner-Webb and being impressed by the team and the coach. “He put me in touch with the coach, and we went from there,” Enslin recounted. “I was keen to come here to become the best tennis player I could be. It’s been a memorable experience.”

Luis Ramirez, of Venezuela, plays on the men's soccer team. He described his freshman year as amazing. He appreciated the help and encouragement he received from his professors as he worked on improving his English. An economics/finance major, his decision to come to Gardner-Webb was also based on the reputation of the Godbold College of Business. “I did my research about Gardner-Webb and the business program and found it interesting,” he stated. “The professors are really nice, especially with internationals. They really help you.”

Although, **Joao Espinheira**, of Brazil, graduated from Gardner-Webb in December 2021 with a degree in international business, he came back for graduate school. A member of the men's soccer team for four years, he's pursuing an international MBA. He is GA (Graduate Assistant) in the Writing Center. He is no longer eligible to play, but he likes helping his former teammates and the new players. His reason for returning? "The people are Number 1," he confirmed.

**Data reflects reported numbers as of Aug. 10, 2022.*

Gardner-Webb University is North Carolina's recognized leader in private, Christian higher education. A Carnegie-Classified Doctoral/Professional University, GWU is home to six professional schools, 14 academic departments, more than 80 undergraduate and graduate majors, and a world-class faculty. Located on a beautiful 225-acre campus in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb prepares graduates to impact their chosen professions, equips them with the skills to advance the frontiers of knowledge, and inspires them to make a positive and lasting difference in the lives of others. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.