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Testimonial Tuesday: Meet Ms. Chloe Boucquemont

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Chloe Boucquemont, French TA, tells of her experience so far at Gardner-Webb. Photo by: Megan Hartman

By: Jennifer Ortiz

Among the many new people who join the Gardner-Webb University family every year are the teaching assistants (TA's) that aid students in their foreign language learning experience. These TA's come from many parts of the world to immerse themselves in American culture while giving American students a glimpse into a different one.

This year Gardner-Webb welcomes Chloe Boucquemont, a French

TA from the north of France. She studied primary education in France, and now holds a master's degree.

Boucquemont first heard about Gardner-Webb through the Fulbright Program, to which she applied last January. "I was elected for an interview in Paris. After that I learned that I was elected, and then Gardner-Webb chose me," she explained.

Boucquemont expressed that even though it has only been a few weeks, she already feels the kindness that comes from the Gardner-Webb community. "I really like the fact that people are really nice with us and they want to show us around. A lot of people are saying, 'Okay, tell me if you want to go there, and I will like to show you that.' I think it's really nice because they don't even know us and they want to take us around and to share their culture," said Boucquemont.



Chloe Boucquemont, French TA, tells of her experience so far at Gardner-Webb.
Photo by: Megan Hartman

Although this is not her first time setting foot on American soil, Chloe voiced her excitement about living in North Carolina for the school year. She had previously spent time in the Boston area, but she already sees the differences between the northeast and the southeast.

"I had an idea of what the northeast of the United States was, but I knew the north and the south was very different,"

Boucquemont told GWU-Today. "People

are really more welcoming and warm, and they take their time to talk with you," she noticed about the south.

Boucquemont is from Reims, a city in the Champagne region in the

northeast of France—a very touristic area, as her native city has one of the biggest champagne industries.

She talked about the way of life in Reims, saying, “In the north of France, people are more rushed in general, but it’s not as rushed as Paris. I’d say that in my region they are more welcoming and take a bit more time than in Paris but it’s not as relaxed [as] in the south.”

Elaborating on the aspects of American culture that she found to be quite different from what she’s accustomed to in France, Boucquemont said, “In my city, most of the time I walk to go from one place to another and I’m used to taking any kind of public transportation. Here, I don’t have this option. I’m walking because I don’t have a car, but I can see that no one else is walking here. Everyone’s taking the car.”

Reminiscing about her home in France, she mentioned that she already misses the food from her country. She (inevitably) mentioned the food in the caf—specifically the cheese which Chloe described as, “not really cheese for me.” She said that French cuisine is an aspect of her culture that she would like to teach to her students.

“We like to prepare the meal, to cook, to spend quite a long time in the kitchen together, to cook for people,” she said. Chloe gave a more specific example of the intricacies of French cuisine adding, “We never have a sandwich for lunch. We have a hot main dish and then the cheese, then the desert. All the time we have desert—you never stop at the main dish.”

Boucquemont also explained the differences between American and French universities, noticing how the majority of students live on campus and how the school provides a lot of on-campus activities and organizations for students here at Gardner-Webb.

She said, “When I was in uni in France, I didn’t live on campus. It’s not common in France; you go to the campus to study, and that’s it. It’s very interesting how you can live on the campus and never really need to go out of the campus. Here, you have a lot of things—lots of events organized for students, and I really like that.”

So far, living in a Christian university for the school year has shown Boucquemont that religion plays a large role in people’s lives. She

told GWU-Today that this is not necessarily the case in France and described the different mindsets between the two cultures.

“Here, I noticed some people with tattoos related to religion. [The Verge] was a religious thing, and I’ve never seen this kind of thing in France,” she explained. “I think people here think more with religion, while in France we don’t really think that way.”

So much can be learned about one’s culture when someone else sees it from a different background. Gardner-Webb is fortunate enough to have a handful of foreign language teaching assistants as well as international students in its small campus.

Boucquemont concluded by expressing how she benefits from her Gardner-Webb experience as much as her students benefit from her.

“So far, I really like my experience here. It’s a great opportunity for me because I can really know more about the American culture. I can learn more about the people and their way of life. That is very interesting for me,” she reflected. “When I will be back in France, I can share my experience here. I can share what I’ve learned, and at the same time, while I’m here, I can share my culture.”



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