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12-7-2015

Letter From the Editor: Farewell!

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Recommended Citation

Ortiz, Jennifer, "Letter From the Editor: Farewell!" (2015). GWU-Today. 154.

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Letter from the editor: Farewell!



By: Jennifer Ortiz

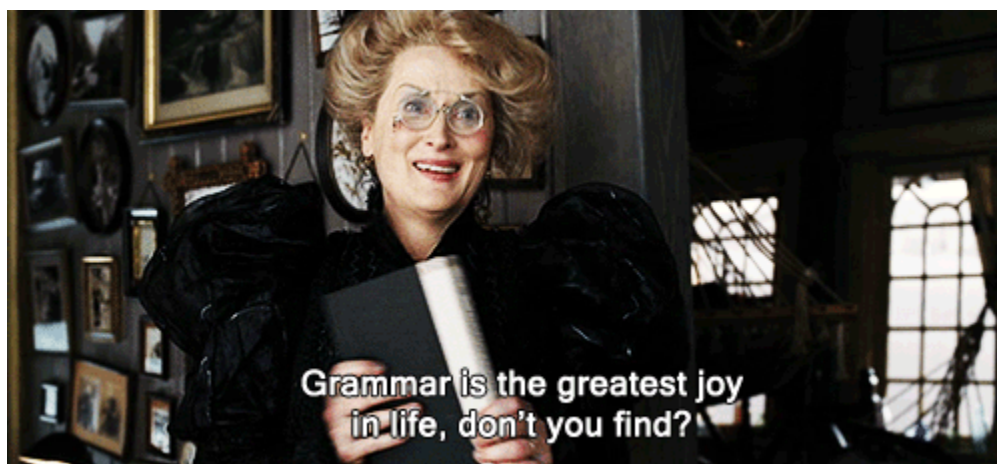




Change is inevitable. That's seen clearly through Gardner-Webb's shift from a physical student newspaper, **The Pilot**, to an online-only publication five years ago. It's seen clearly through the new batch of student journalists, photographers and videographers who volunteer, contribute or sign up for the one credit course each semester. They bring in new ideas, interests and new perspectives to the table, and these aspects always change the style of GWU-Today, for better or for worse.

This semester, I had the privilege of serving as an editor and bringing my own perspectives as a leader to the conference room table where we met every Monday. I heard story ideas from budding journalists, photographers and videographers—their interests, the clubs they were involved in—about the things they love the most about Gardner-Webb.

I worked closely with the writers and the stories they crafted, and this further emphasized **for me** the importance of the reporting process and the written word. At the start of the semester, I (stupidly) thought that would improve GWU-Today: perfect syntax, not a trace of the oxford comma.



While I was satisfied knowing that I played a large part in “grammatically perfecting” a writer’s work, something kept discouraging me after each story was published.

Did anyone read that story we worked so long for as a team?

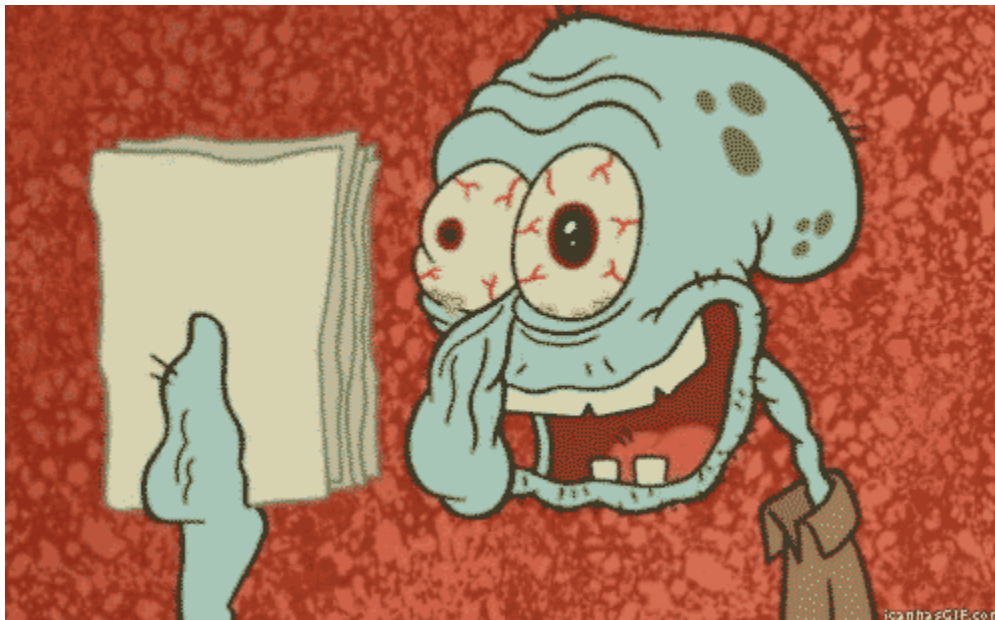
Staff writers spend time outside of their schedules to contact sources, cover events and write (and re-write) stories. I spent so much time checking for grammar, making sure all the details were there and sorting

through photos to choose the best visuals for each particular article.

Yes, we received 20+ likes on Instagram and maybe a favorite on **Twitter** (I guess it's a "like" now, but don't even get me started...), but did anyone actually read what the writers and editors also worked hard to produce? Did anyone scroll through the photo story and recognize the work of our photographers?

The new implementation of tracking clicks through bitly.com shows that, yes, we did get some clicks to our articles. Sometimes 5 and sometimes 453. (**This** is our most clicked on story.) It's just a bummer when, as a writer, a story you created seems to not matter to anyone but you. Such is college journalism, but a byline is a byline.

While my personal interests regarding GWU-Today and journalism are in reporting and writing, I do also recognize that social media, photography and videography play a huge part in reaching our audience—students just like us. I think these skills are great assets to any online publication, especially college media (since droopy eyes are tired of reading and writing words from left to right and would much less want to read a news story about the event that happened the other day).



Creating content that attracts a Gardner-Webb audience is and has been a learning experience. It's certainly a challenge. I'm sure other university student news sources also face the same challenges we do.

Student journalism is hard, and because it's a learning experience for everyone involved, it won't ever be perfect. But it matters. Journalism matters. I wish someone would have emphasized this to me as a writer and an editor during my time here.

GWU-Today can be something that matters too. Not just to the students that are gaining portfolio material and valuable real-world experience, but to the students that are consuming it.

Everyone always says 'community and people.' That's what we at Gardner-Webb do best.

Dean Curry said that was her favorite thing about Gardner-Webb in an interview for [a story I wrote](#) back in August. That quote has been ringing through my head all semester. It's true.

Much like local news sources define the voices of a community—of people—so can our online publication define and emphasize the diversity of voices on this campus.

While GWU-Today can emphasize all the good that is Gardner-Webb, it can also strive to bring to light student concerns. There are a plethora of student concerns and complaints (some more articulate than others)—have you seen [Yik Yak](#)? If complaints, concerns and suggestions were verbalized as coherent arguments, and if we would treat GWU-Today as an integral part of the Gardner-Webb community (just like the media is such an integral part of any community), wouldn't students have a platform for discourse among SGA and university officials? Wouldn't we be doing...news? News that mattered to students and Gardner-Webb as a whole?



I looked through the archives of our former paper, and the very first article in the front page of the publication was titled 'We Don't Have a Name Yet.'

After all, this paper belongs to every one in this college... They consider you a part of Gardner-Webb, so if the paper isn't good it's a reflection on you as well as the staff.

That was published on Nov. 9, 1942.

We have a name now, but do we have a mission, a purpose, a presence? Even through all the changes that occurred throughout the history of Gardner-Webb student publications, that quote from more than 70 years ago is timeless.

This student publication belongs to every student at Gardner-Webb. It's about you—the people that make Gardner-Webb such a special place.

Despite the critical sentiments that may have been conveyed here, I really do appreciate that I was able to be a small part in the ever-changing cycle of GWU-Today. This was, in fact, a large part of my time here at Gardner-Webb. I'm glad that I've worked with students that also have similar drive to work hard for this publication despite the amount of clicks and shares. I cannot wait to see GWU-Today pop up on my twitter

feed and see new changes taking place. Through conversations I've had with writers, I know the talent is there.

If you stuck around long enough to read this, thank you. Now it's time for some crazy changes to happen in my life once I walk across that stage in a few days.

