

## News

## GROWING IN NUMBERS

## Teacher education program sees growth

Megan Berry  
Pilot staff

Gardner-Webb's teacher education program has recently seen an increase in students admitted. Whereas the program admitted about 30 applicants last year, 44 new students were admitted into the program this year.

Donna Simmons, head of the teacher education program, attributes this year's growth to several factors.

"This year's candidates were outstanding," said Simmons. "More and more are passing the Praxis I exam, and we have seen an increase in students' GPAs."

Simmons also noted the faculty of the School of Education as a reason for growth, calling the faculty the "heart and strength of the program."

Simmons stated that the faculty of the program brings with it a wealth of preparation, interests, experiences and styles. The professors of the school are dedicated to prepare the best teachers and administrators of the future, said Simmons.

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growth of the School of Education, she also noted that each year the program experiences an "ebb and flow" of applicants.

"We admit anywhere from 25 to 50 new students each year," said Simmons.

Above all, Simmons sees this year's growth as an indication of students' interests in education.

"There is an upsurge in people interested in teacher education," said Simmons. "More people are following their hearts there."

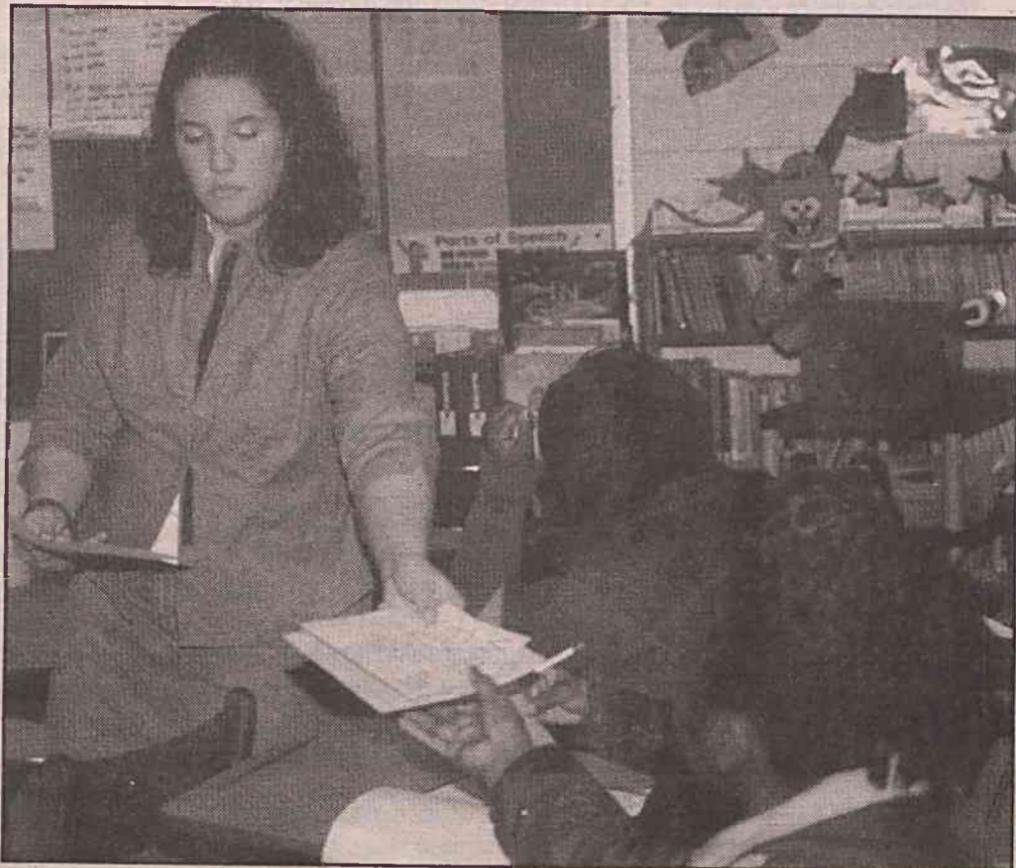


Photo by Scott Holstein

Jana Trader (GWU student) teaches a Language Arts class at Shelby Middle School on April 11. Lessons for the day included detail and cause and effect.

## PROFESSOR RESIGNS

## Plonk departs after events from fall semester

Jennifer Menster  
Pilot design editor

Psychology professor Kevin Jenkins Plonk announced her resignation April 14. The news came as a shock to many students and faculty.

"I wasn't expecting that at all," said Senior ASL major Josh Gouge. "She is one of the most approachable, compassionate, incredible teachers I've ever had, and that includes all of high school, middle school and elementary school."

Gouge had Plonk for two classes and interpreted in one. Gouge described Plonk as a teacher who really cares for her students and would "bend over backwards" when a student needed help.

"The school is definitely at a loss," Gouge said.



Plonk

Plonk's colleagues agree.

"I think the school will miss her a great deal," said David Carscaddon, chair for the Psychology department. "She was highly regarded by her colleagues and was an excellent teacher."

Carscaddon described Plonk as an innovative, creative teacher, who made ideas come to life in the classroom. When Carscaddon, who attended the University of South Carolina with Plonk, heard of her resignation, he immediately felt the loss and had a sense of sadness.

Plonk is also sad about her decision, which was not easy for her to make.

She was considering resigning in October during the controversy surrounding the university. However, her loyalty to the school, her students and her colleagues were a few reasons why she stayed.

"I decided that I wouldn't exit the system because of the loyalty to Gardner-Webb, unless I could feel at peace that I had said what I needed to

say," Plonk said. "At that time, I was at a place where I had the energy to stay in the system I was loyal to, use my voice and hopefully make a difference."

However, Plonk is not at peace with the situation still surrounding Gardner-Webb. She said the main reason she resigned was because she feels disappointed with the lack of attention given to the matters of integrity after last semester's incident.

Plonk said she is an open person and has voiced her opinions to President Campbell, who has been available to hear her concerns. However, Plonk feels that Campbell has a big mountain to climb.

"I had been hopeful that we could see more progress toward admitting our mistakes, forgiveness and healing," Plonk said.

Plonk said there were other reasons for her resignation, such as spending time with her daughter, but getting another job was not one.

At the moment, Plonk does not

have a new job lined up, but she has a few ideas of what she would like to do, such as teaching children with special needs or working for a school system as a school counselor.

While Plonk said she would like to do these jobs, she never thought she would be considering working anywhere else but GWU.

"I never thought I'd leave Gardner-Webb," Plonk said. "I think the hardest part will be leaving the so many great people that I love. They are the ones who kept me here after October."

Plonk came to GWU in 1997 as an adjunct professor. In the fall of 1999, she became a full-time assistant professor for Psychology. In her years here, Plonk has taught about 12 different classes, including graduate-level classes, and has served as coordinator for school counseling in the graduate program.

"I am at peace with my decision, but I am grieving," Plonk said. "I am really going to miss my colleagues, my students and the university."