

GARDNER-WEBB

Volume 60, 2025

THE MAGAZINE



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GARDNER-WEBB UNIVERSITY

The mission of Gardner-Webb University is to prepare graduates for leadership and service in their professional careers and in their personal lives.

Rigorous and innovative degree programs, combined with distinctive experiential learning opportunities, shape students into thinkers, doers, and world-changers. Forged within a supportive and diverse Christian community, our students emerge ready to impact their chosen professions, equipped with the skills to advance the frontiers of knowledge, and inspired to make a positive and lasting difference in the lives of others

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GARDNER-WEBB • THE MAGAZINE

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Mission-Focused Progress

Dear Runnin' Bulldogs,
As I reflect on the past year, and especially the last few months serving as Interim President, I'm filled with gratitude and hope. The title *Interim* often signals a time of uncertainty, but let me assure you, at Gardner-Webb University there is certainty in abundance. We are certain that our Christian mission matters. We are certain that we are changing lives for the better. And we are certain that our University is not just enduring, but thriving.

This season of transition has not slowed our momentum. It has refined it. In the face of challenge and change, our faculty, staff, students, alumni, and supporters have shown what true leadership looks like: steady, mission-driven, and focused on the future. Gardner-Webb is a great institution, made stronger by those who have answered the call to lead in their respective areas, whether in classrooms, boardrooms, residence halls, or athletic arenas.

Allow me to share just a few ways the GWU community is gaining momentum and leading with purpose.

This past academic year marked the completion of our 2020 to 2025 Strategic Plan, a vision that guided Gardner-Webb through a pivotal period of growth and adaptation. The plan strengthened core areas such as student success, academic excellence, and financial stewardship, and it positioned us to meet emerging challenges with confidence. We are now building on that momentum with renewed focus and a firm commitment to operational excellence and mission alignment as we prepare for the future.

This year, we experienced meaningful growth made possible by leadership in action across our entire community. We received the largest single gift to



the University in more than 25 years, an extraordinary act of generosity that reflects the confidence donors have in Gardner-Webb's direction. We also secured our first-ever federal grant, a \$2.2 million award through HRSA to expand mental health counseling training in Western North Carolina through our College of Health Sciences. This achievement reflects the dedication of our academic community to advancing Gardner-Webb's role as a regional leader in workforce development and mental health care. Thanks to your support, Double Dawg Day was a record-breaking success, surpassing \$2.8 million in contributions and showcasing

the collective leadership of alumni, students, and friends who believe in our mission. At the time of this writing, our endowment is approaching the \$82 million mark, a significant milestone that reflects years of strategic financial stewardship and long-term vision.

Our academic community continues to lead through innovation and partnership. New collaborations with industry and local communities are helping us create pathways to a Gardner-Webb degree that is rooted in both Christian values and professional readiness. In December and May, we celebrated the graduation of more than 900 students, awarding Gardner-



Webb's 25,000th bachelor's degree along the way.

This year, we sent student mission teams to serve around the globe, including in Kenya, Haiti, Western North Carolina, and the Dominican Republic. Even closer to home, we witnessed powerful moments of spiritual transformation, as students made public professions of faith. A total of 59 individuals were baptized across campus, including 11 who took that step in the pool at Bost Gym. These public professions of faith are a powerful reminder that our Christian mission remains alive and active. More mission trips are already planned for the fall and spring semesters, continuing this important work of service and discipleship.

Our student-athletes continue to lead by example. Gardner-Webb won conference championships in Men's Soccer and Men's Tennis, along with individual championships in wrestling, track and field, and swimming. More than 335 student-athletes earned Presidential Honor Roll recognition in the Big South, with 41 earning a perfect 4.0 GPA. Our athletic programs are



not only competitive; they reflect the academic integrity of our institution. And let's not forget the extraordinary moments that make college sports special. Our wrestling team competed aboard the USS Yorktown, and the U.S. Army Golden Knights parachuted into Spangler Stadium for Homecoming. *(Spoiler alert, both will happen again this year.)*

At Gardner-Webb, we are not immune to the broader challenges facing higher education. Demographic shifts, inflation, changing government policies, and evolving NCAA regulations demand that we lead with vigilance, adaptability, and creativity. Innovation, once a buzzword, is now a necessity. Yet in the midst of these pressures, Gardner-Webb remains grounded. We are evolving, but never at the expense of our Christian mission. We will continue to lead, to serve, and to thrive.

Gardner-Webb is a special place, not because of buildings or rankings, but because of the people who lead with conviction, passion, and faith. Leadership is not tied to position or permanence. It is revealed through service, trust, and a deep commitment to something greater than ourselves.

This is our university. Its future is strong because of all of us. Together, let us lead with faith, serve with purpose, and write the next chapter in Gardner-Webb's proud and storied history. As you read the pages that follow, I hope you will be inspired by the many ways Runnin' Bulldogs are answering the call to lead, whether in their communities, careers, classrooms, or churches.

Nate Evans
Interim President,
Gardner-Webb University



Guided by Mission, Driven by Relationships: Meet GWU Interim President Nate Evans

In February 2025, the Gardner-Webb University Board of Trustees appointed Nate Evans as interim president. Evans, who served GWU since October 2020 as vice president for Advancement, brings 13 years of experience in higher education to his new role.

“I am honored and humbled that the board of trustees selected me for this responsibility,” Evans stated. “I am grateful to those who have led Gardner-Webb so well. I pledge to uphold our Christian values and build upon our University’s momentum and success.”

Board Chair the Rev. Dr. Lamont Littlejohn Jr. remarked, “I have known Nate since he arrived at GWU. He has been a constant presence on campus and has built strong relationships of trust with stakeholders across the University community. He is a man of faith and will keep the University on its Christian mission during this time of transition.”

During his tenure in the Advancement Office, Evans led initiatives that positively impacted GWU’s campus. Notably, he and his team raised more than \$30 million in gifts and gift commitments. His leadership contributed to new construction,

renovations, lab equipment purchases, and scholarship funding, to name a few.

Now serving as interim president, Evans sees his role as providing stability and continuity. “That means supporting ongoing initiatives, especially our focus on enrollment growth, student retention, and academic excellence,” Evans said.

“I’m spending a lot of my time truly listening to what the University community are saying, their perspectives, what they need, their ideas, and concerns. I’m supporting the team that’s already here, and keeping the University moving forward in a healthy, mission-driven way. It’s about stewarding the momentum and setting the table for whoever comes next,” noted Evans.

The relationships and collaboration he already established in Advancement helped him transition into the presidential role. He described the Office of Advancement as “a front row seat to the heart of the University.”

Evans explained, “You interact with our students, you interact with donors, alumni, our faculty and staff. And through that, I learned how much people care and how much people love Gardner-Webb. And then, of course, working across those departments, building those relationships as we steward the resources that folks have given us really helps you get in tune to the University ecosystem and how things work and who does what.”

Evans holds a Bachelor of Arts in exercise and sports science from East Carolina University and a Master of Science in human resource management from Western Carolina University. Before his higher education career, Evans served as an officer in the U.S. Air Force and worked in the small business sector.



His leadership style draws from all those experiences—marked by attention to detail, adaptability, and relational leadership. “In every role I’ve had, success came down to staying grounded in the mission and focusing on relationships,” Evans said. “You won’t be the expert in everything, but you need to know who the experts are and understand what drives them. That’s how you bring it all together.”

In the military, he was given an assignment and told to go figure it out. That experience made him a better manager. “It reminds me to make sure that people have the resources and the understanding on how to do their jobs if they need it,” Evans related. “Provide them what they need and remove the barriers.”

Evans is happily married to Dr. Brittany Evans, a Gardner-Webb alumna and visiting assistant professor in the College of Education. They enjoy supporting students at GWU events, being outdoors, motorcycle riding, and spending time with friends.



Scan the QR code to tune in to WebbChat: Episode 23 —“**Steady Hands, Bold Steps: Nate Evans Talks Leadership at Gardner-Webb**” from the Gardner-Webb University Podcast Network.



GARDNER-WEBB UNIVERSITY





Empowered to Lead: Gardner-Webb's Ongoing Mission in Action

BY JACKIE BRIDGES

The mission statement of Gardner-Webb University includes a pledge to develop leaders. Founded in 1905, the once Baptist high school grew into a nationally recognized university and model for Christian higher education. The founders' vision is reflected in the motto inscribed on the University's seal: "Pro Deo et Humanitate," For God and Humanity.

Trailblazers like J.D. Huggins and Ella Curtis, the school's first administrators, gave all they had to build the school and enlisted others to carry on after them. The list of supporters grew, until its reputation captured the attention of Fay Webb Gardner, a Cleveland County native and wife of North Carolina Gov. O. Max Gardner. In 1942, it was renamed Gardner-Webb Junior College, later Gardner-Webb College, in honor of their substantial contributions, and in 1993, the institution was elevated to Gardner-Webb University.

Because of their determination, Gardner-Webb is a thriving place. Students—like junior Issa Cogdell, senior Kylee Morris, and May 2025 Most Outstanding Graduate Connor Settlemyre—emerge ready to impact their chosen professions and make a positive and lasting difference in the lives of others.

Cogdell has found success and opportunities through the Searight Professional and Continuing Education (PACE) Leadership Program. While working at a summer camp, Cogdell met a child who couldn't read and found a way to make books more accessible to him and other children. Through PACE, he developed a digital library for elementary through college students.

Dr. Anthony Negbenebor, professor and assistant vice president for Business Development and Partnerships, coordinates the PACE Leadership Program. "I have known Issa for some time, and he is a man of impeccable character, a great Christian and a person committed to the goals of higher education and Christian ethics," Negbenebor assessed. "His leadership skills, initiative, commitment and creativity are

truly exceptional. He is focused on his discipline and searching for ways to impact the world around him."

In the same way, Morris impresses those around her with her cheerful attitude and enthusiasm. The 2022 winner of Gardner-Webb's Tucker Scholarship, she is a leader in the Marching Bulldogs and the classroom. Morris' schedule is full as a biology major, biomedical sciences concentration, with minors in chemistry and psychology. In addition, she is a teacher assistant in the chemistry lab.

Retiring Gardner-Webb Professor of History Dr. David Yelton spent 35 years encouraging students like Morris and Cogdell to see the connection between studying history and achieving success in any profession.

In the School of Divinity, graduate students receive insights from Professor of Historical Theology Dr. Steve Harmon. Through his efforts to seek unity among Christian traditions, Harmon provided expert analysis from Rome when Pope Leo XIV was elected in May 2025.

Gardner-Webb alumni leave Boiling Springs, N.C., to become leaders wherever they go. Some, like Caroline Leitten, '17, took her first mission trip to Peru as a GWU student. Now, she and her husband have a ministry there for abandoned children.

Keon Williams, '14, a leader in banking and finance, follows the example of professors in the Godbold School of Business who led with their faith. This year, he opened a Tacos4Life franchise in Charlotte, N.C., that's mission is to help feed hungry children around the world.

The influence of Gardner-Webb continues to echo throughout students' lives—and sometimes, that impact inspires extraordinary generosity. Such is the case with a remarkable \$1.85 million gift from one of our student's parents.

On the pages that follow, you'll learn more about these pacesetters who challenge convention, inspire change and reshape expectations in communities across the globe.

"When you drink the water, don't forget who dug the well."

Dr. Shirley Putnam Toney, Gardner-Webb dean and professor emerita of nursing



Drawing from the Well: 60 Years of Nursing Excellence at Gardner-Webb

Where educators inspire, students lead,
and lives are changed—one nurse at a time

BY JACKIE BRIDGES

Dean and Professor Emerita of Nursing Dr. Shirley Putnam Toney enjoyed a career that spanned more than half a century at Gardner-Webb University. As an early leader of the school's nursing program, Toney acknowledges that establishing the nursing school was a collaborative effort.

As the Hunt School of Nursing (HSN) celebrates its 60th anniversary in 2025-26, Toney honors the school's forerunners who "dug the well," for her generation and the next. Of the school's six leaders, four were Toney's students.

Bold visionaries like Toney and Grace Lee—the driving forces behind nursing education at GWU—led with intelligence, integrity, resilience, humility and service. “Dr. Shirley Toney is a legendary nurse educator not only at GWU but across our state and region,” said Dr. Anna Hamrick, former HSON director and student at Gardner-Webb from 1999 to 2003. “I always admired her confident presence and her unwavering advocacy for her students and nursing program. She showed deep respect for her colleagues and never missed a chance to celebrate their accomplishments.”

Nursing Education Begins at GWU

Lee, the director of the Rutherford Hospital School of Nursing, and Toney worked at the hospital together from 1963-65. The hospital’s nursing programs had become too expensive, so Lee investigated the Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) program, a curriculum developed to reduce repetition and provide additional structured learning experiences in collegiate settings.

Lee already had an affiliation with Gardner-Webb, so she and Toney met frequently with Dr. Eugene Poston, then president of Gardner-Webb, and local hospital administrators to help bring the ADN program to GWU.

In 1965, Gardner-Webb welcomed the first 45 nursing students. The department’s shared space featured modest nursing supplies including a bed, some equipment, a manikin, and a movie projector, all donated by Rutherford Hospital.

In 1970, the Gardner-Webb Nursing School was one of the first two ADN programs in the state to become nationally accredited. When Lee retired in 1978, Toney became the School of Nursing chair and was later named its first dean.

Nursing School Expands Programs

From the 1980s through the 2000s, Toney helped grow the University’s nursing programs to meet the needs of a changing health care landscape. For her profound influence, Toney received the Gardner-Webb Founders Medal in 2024.

One of her lasting contributions is the Registered Nurse (RN) to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program. The RN to BSN completion program was funded by a grant from the Kate B. Reynolds Trust, the Davis Trust, and Waggoner Foundation of Statesville, N.C. It was later renamed the Davis Nursing Program, and today it’s offered fully online.

Toney also established a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) program,

I was first introduced to the School of Nursing when I entered the ADN program out of high school. The community I found within the nursing program and at the University led me to continue my education in the HSON at the bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral levels. Early in my educational journey, I came to appreciate the faculty’s dedication to the personal and professional growth of their students, which led me to continue my educational journey.

Dr. Tracy Arnold, ‘02, ‘04, ‘06 and ‘12
Associate Dean, College of Health Sciences

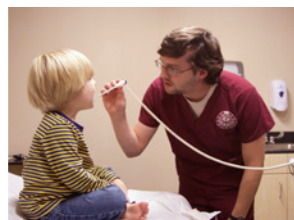
which officially launched in 2001. Under her guidance, Gardner-Webb’s nursing programs gained full accreditation.

“We kept up with the things that were going on in the country and were always affiliated with our professional associations,” Toney stated. “I’m delighted and overjoyed at the success of our programs. We are not just measured against local people; we are measured against people all over the country.”

When Toney stepped down, Dr. Rebecca “Susie” Beck-Little became

Number of Degrees Awarded in 60 years:

Associate – 1,958 | Bachelor’s – 2,173 | Graduate – 1,052 | Total – 5,183



In the 2025 Spring Semester, 328 students were enrolled in the Hunt School of Nursing:

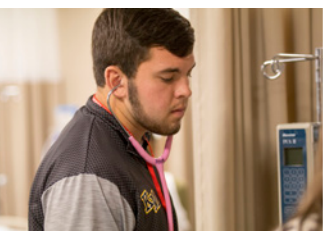
57 ASN | 128 BSN | 153 Graduate

dean. Under her leadership, Gardner-Webb welcomed its first cohort in the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program in 2010. At that time, the only established DNP program was located at Duke University in Durham, N.C.

In January 2013 the MSN–Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) program began. Dr. Sharon Starr was named dean of the nursing school that summer. Starr received her ADN from Gardner-Webb in 1976 and had previously served as a member of the GWU nursing faculty from 2001-04.

Hunt Gift Secures GWU Nursing's Future

In 2014, Gardner-Webb purchased the former Crawley Memorial Hospital to house the College of Health Sciences. A month later, N.C. Rep. Dr. Jack Hunt and his wife, Ruby, established the HSON to provide a scholarship, program enhancements, renovations of nursing facilities, and educational technology.



Starr coordinated the move, relying on the faculty's expertise for setting up the simulation labs and offices. "That was such a meaningful experience, because it helped the nursing school in so many different ways, and it was a blessing to meet Jack Hunt and his wife, Ruby, and to know the kind of people they were," Starr reflected. "I was so proud that the school of nursing would be named after somebody of their stature and who were such kind, generous people."

The Hunts, of Lattimore, N.C., were community leaders and supporters of higher education. For 22 years, Jack served in the North Carolina General Assembly. In 2012, Hunt was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Gardner-Webb. A member of the GWU Board of Trustees, he was honored in 2020 with the title of trustee emeritus. Jack and Ruby received North Carolina's Order of the Long Leaf Pine for their many contributions to the state.

Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Nicole Waters was named HSON dean when Starr retired in 2017. An alumna, Waters developed a relationship with the Hunts and understood the significance of their gift. "Dr. and Mrs. Hunt demonstrated a genuine interest in health care trends and nursing education, often engaging in meaningful discussions on these topics, usually accompanied by a sincere invitation to share a meal at their home," Waters said. "Their heartfelt commitment

to advancing the nursing profession extended beyond Gardner-Webb, reaching the broader community and state, helping countless students fulfill their calling to become nurses and nurse educators.”

HSON Faculty Look to the Future

The faculty developed curricula for the Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (ABSN) program, Doctor of Nursing Practice-Family Nurse Practitioner (DNP-FNP), and the Doctor of Nursing Practice-Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (DNP-PMHNP) program. To meet the need for mental health providers, HSON leaders obtained a grant from the Fullerton Foundation to help start the DNP-PMHNP. The first students enrolled in these DNP programs in the fall of 2019.

“As a result, more registered nurses and nurse practitioners are entering the workforce, directly contributing to improved health care delivery in their communities,” said Dr. Tracy Arnold,

The School of Nursing has profoundly influenced my academic, professional and spiritual life. The faculty demonstrated a Christ-centered approach, providing academic support, prayer, mentorship, and personal encouragement. These meaningful experiences inspired me to pursue a faculty position in the School of Nursing later. As a faculty member, I discovered a community that nurtured intellectual curiosity, scholarly engagement and leadership development. Now, as an administrator, I feel deeply honored to contribute to the legacy of the nursing programs. I take great pride in the rich history, mission and ongoing excellence of the Hunt School of Nursing.

Dr. Nicole Waters, '06 and '14

Interim Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs

former dean/director of HSON, and current associate dean of the College of Health Sciences. “Additionally, we were able to expand our resources to include state-of-the art equipment and lab spaces to simulate realistic work environments in an effort to bridge the gap between classroom instruction and professional practice.”

With funding from the Golden LEAF Foundation to address regional health workforce shortages, donations from GWU supporters and other grants, the nursing faculty are prepared to lead the HSON into its next century, and to prepare the next generation of highly skilled, compassionate nurses.



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Poetry, Place, and Purpose: Dr. Alana Dagenhart's Fulbright Story

GWU alumna brings Appalachian voice to Belfast through scholarship, teaching, and cultural exploration

BY JACKIE BRIDGES

Dr. Alana Dagenhart, a Gardner-Webb University alumna, scholar, and poet, is living her dream in Belfast, Northern Ireland, as a 2025 Fulbright U.S. Scholar. An English faculty member at Johnson & Wales University (JWU), Dagenhart is studying and teaching poetry at the Seamus Heaney Centre at Queen's University Belfast.

Since arriving in Belfast in January 2025, Dagenhart has explored the land and met the people of Ireland to gather information and inspiration. She shares her thoughts and impressions on her blog at alanadagenhart.com. On her 10th day in the country, Dagenhart wrote: "There is a magical quality about the air. Everyone looks like someone I know. I see people on the street, or in a shop and feel like I know them. Y'all know Iredell County was settled by people from this region of Northern Ireland, the Ulster Scots, so no surprise, but it is an eerily familiar sensation."

Dagenhart received her Master of Arts in English from Gardner-Webb University





in 2004. She said those classes broadened her perspective beyond the United States. “I was reading ‘The Kite Runner’ for a (GWU) world literature class and realized that the author was roughly my age,” Dagenhart reflected. “It crushed me to think that while he and his characters were trying to survive a Taliban-invaded Afghanistan in the 1980s, I’d been on my side of the globe worried about Friday night football.”

She continued, “We read gorgeous stories from Africa, Japan, China, South America, and India, stories of love, of families, heritage and heartbreak. My classes helped me to consider what it means to be a citizen of the world, not just North Carolina. My GWU English professors encouraged challenge. They made me memorize Shakespeare and they modeled fantastic teaching. They set me up for a Ph.D. in literature and criticism, but more importantly, they became mentors and cherished friends.”

Dagenhart started writing poems in elementary school and is honored to

be working at the epicenter of poetry. Dagenhart exclaimed, “I am in a land that honors poetry and celebrates poets. Plus, I am teaching poetry! As a poet and teacher, I don’t think I could ask for more.”

As a Fulbright Scholar, Dagenhart’s project delves into the intersections of Northern Irish poetry, North Carolina literature, and cultural connections. Her research also focuses on ecopoetics, which draws connections between the writing of poems and the environment that produces it, and Ciaran Carson, a prolific poet of Belfast.

“This study connects people and texts, bringing new insights that transform our reading of historical works,” Dagenhart noted. “Linking Appalachian poetry to Northern Ireland could reshape our view of Appalachian literature, and collaborations will foster future research.”

She has enjoyed “Appalachian” traditional music sessions, the International Appalachian Trail (IAT)

on the Antrim Coast, and Rathlin Island to see the Puffins. “I visited parliament in Cardiff, Wales, and the Robinson Library in Armagh, Ireland, where they have an original copy of Jonathan Swift’s ‘Gulliver’s Travels.’”

She recently presented “Art, Poetry, and Belfast: How Place Informs Poetry Writing and Being in the World,” which describes how her time in Belfast has shaped her poetry and ideas about place. Reflecting on her Fulbright journey, she shared, “Receiving this prestigious award has been a lifelong academic aspiration and a five-year application journey. Each year, I progressed a little more through the process. I am so glad I did not give up.” Her journey serves as an inspiration to aspiring scholars and educators, emphasizing the value of perseverance and intellectual curiosity.

Dagenhart earned her Ph.D. in literature and criticism from Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She has been on the faculty of JWU for 17 years. She is the author of “Yellow Leaves” (Redhawk Publications, 2022), and “Blood” (Finishing Line Press, 2016). Her poems have also appeared in various journals including “Tar River Poetry,” “Kakalak,” “Pinesong,” “Main Street Rag,” and “Emrys.”

Dr. Richard Mathieu, president of JWU Charlotte Campus, expressed his pride in Dagenhart’s accomplishments, noting that her scholarly pursuit will ultimately enrich the educational experience for her students. He added, “Alana’s selection for a Fulbright Award is an outstanding testament to her excellence in the field of poetic literature.”

For more details about U.S. Fulbright Scholars, visit the US-UK Fulbright Commission website.

Johnson & Wales University Communications and Media Relations contributed to this report.



A Seat at the Table

Gardner-Webb Alumnus Keon Williams Jr.
Opens Restaurant with a Mission

BY JACKIE BRIDGES

After a decade of helping bank customers invest their money, Keon Williams Jr. decided it was time to pursue his entrepreneurial dream—but with a mission. The 2014 alumnus of Gardner-Webb University opened the restaurant Tacos4Life in Charlotte, N.C.

“The sole purpose of Tacos4Life is to end starvation around the world,” Williams affirmed. “If I’m going to do entrepreneurship, this is the kind of brand that I want to be a part of because of the food quality and the mission.”

For every taco, bowl, salad, quesadilla, or nachos purchased, a portion is donated to Feed My Starving Children (FMSC). The

nonprofit has developed three scientifically formulated MannaPack meals that provide children with the nutrients they need to grow strong and healthy. MannaPacks are sent to over 70 countries where they are distributed through schools, orphanages and FMSC CarePoints.

Opening a restaurant runs in the family, Williams’ grandparent and parent owned eateries in Upstate New York. With the goal to someday start his own business, Williams majored in economics/finance and minored in French at Gardner-Webb.

Starting with GWU professor of economics and international business Dr. Anthony Negbenebor, Williams

learned principles that have followed him throughout his career. Then, as a cornerback on the Runnin’ Bulldogs football team, Williams gained valuable leadership and teamwork skills. He and his teammates became a brotherhood and still keep in touch.

Additionally, the Godbold College of Business provided opportunities to feed Williams’ entrepreneurial spirit. His sophomore year, he got an internship with Northwestern Mutual. He was also influenced by a group of Christian business leaders, known as C12, who visited campus to discuss the value of faith-driven management.

Owning Tacos4Life combines his family background, and the skills learned at Gardner-Webb. He loves interacting with people at the restaurant. He greets and engages each customer. Similarly, he speaks words of appreciation to his staff for the work they do to welcome and serve guests.

Williams' journey to become a franchisee started in 2017 when he took his first bite of a Tacos4Life fried chicken taco. "Then, I had the chicken quesadilla, and I was like, 'OK, this chipotle aioli takes it to a whole other level,'" he asserted.

In 2019, Williams contacted the owners, Austin and Ashton Samuelson, to ask about opening a franchise. They invited him to fly to Arkansas. "I shared my



For every taco, bowl, salad, quesadilla, or nachos purchased, a portion is donated to Feed My Starving Children (FMSC).



business background and why I wanted to open one in the Charlotte Metro market," Williams related. "They believed in me, believed in what I shared, my ideologies and my faith, and so they said, 'OK, we'll go down this journey with you.'"

However, before they were able to begin, the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and Williams was forced to put his plans on hold. He also moved away from Charlotte, taking a job with T. Rowe Price in Baltimore, Md.

Williams and the Samuelsons resumed their discussion in 2022; around the same time, Williams came back to Charlotte to



work at Truist. "God ordered the steps in that way," he asserted. "Charlotte made the most sense from my network, my footprint, and my spheres of influence."

During the day he works at Truist as vice president of underwriting, public finance. Monday through Thursday, he arrives to work at the restaurant at 5:30 p.m. On

Fridays, he's there at 3 p.m., and he works all day on Saturdays. They are closed on Sundays.

He is grateful to everyone at Gardner-Webb for modeling how to lead with faith. "They took time and sowed seeds of faith in me. Faith is who you are, it's your DNA. At Gardner-Webb, I really understood and owned that for the first time," said Williams.

To represent his faith, Williams asked the construction team to place a Bible in the Tacos4Life foundation. "The principles of the restaurant, all the principles that I instill into our staff—servant leadership, loyalty, honesty—those things are biblical," Williams asserted. "But you don't teach them by telling them, you teach them by showing. When people walk in, we greet and we acknowledge them, for the very fact that God loves and acknowledges us."

Keon Williams Jr. Honors and Community Service

- Attended the China Europe International Business School 2015 Shanghai boot camp, where nearly 70 participants heard lectures from experts, visited multinational companies, and engaged in career-development activities.
- Founded Play Fresh Inc., a 501c3 nonprofit organization, in 2016. The purpose is to utilize football to educate middle school students on composting, recycling and sustainability. The organization sponsored a children's camp led by GWU football alumni. Williams has also written a children's book on the topic.
- Charlotte Mecklenburg Black Chamber of Commerce 30 Under 30 Class of 2018.
- Gardner-Webb Distinguished Alumni Award 2019.



Go Love: A Mission Born at Gardner-Webb, Thriving in Peru

Caroline Leitten, '17, leads a Christ-centered response to the orphan crisis

BY JACKIE BRIDGES

In Iquitos, Peru, one in 12 children under the age of 15 is abandoned to live on the streets or placed in foster care. The main reason is poverty: Parents simply don't have money to care for their children. At times, the situation becomes overwhelming to Gardner-Webb University 2017 alumna Caroline Ashley Marvin Leitten. The needs are great, and

her ministry, Go Love, is only equipped for 24 orphans.

Because of the immense challenges, Go Love is unable to help everyone in need. They must turn away up to three orphans weekly. Leitten said it's difficult to say no, but she focuses on improving the lives the ministry has rescued. She and her husband, Nick, started the mission in

2021 and have accomplished much with the support of family and friends.

When Leitten came to Gardner-Webb in 2013, Peru wasn't on her radar. She began as a nursing student and chose Gardner-Webb because freshmen are accepted into the nursing program. Plus, she had received scholarships and was attracted to the close-knit community. However, by the

"God gave me a very specific vision for non-industrialized, family-styled homes for orphaned and abandoned children here."

Caroline Leitten



end of her first year, she was struggling in her nursing courses. She switched to elementary education and began to thrive. She also took a work study job as manager of the softball team.

"The atmosphere and community at Gardner-Webb was rare and such a gift to find," Leitten shared. "I heavily value the opportunity that I had to be softball manager. Not only did it teach me so much, develop me, and give me an incredible community, but it also connected me to the staff and University in a powerful way. I had such great relationships with my professors and the staff in the Department of Education and I am still in contact with many of them today."

In 2014, she took her first short-term mission trip to serve at a boys' orphanage in Peru. She cried when it was time to leave. "That first trip changed the trajectory of my life," Leitten reflected. "My eyes were opened, and my heart was heavily burdened by the orphan crisis. I witnessed firsthand the desperate need for the Gospel, a hope that can only be found in Jesus, and the love that these children

were so eagerly pursuing. I continued visiting and serving every summer throughout my college years."

When she graduated in December 2017, she accepted a position at the elementary school where she had completed her student teaching. She went to Peru to volunteer until her job started in January. During that trip, she distinctly felt God calling her to pursue ministry full time. She moved to Peru a year later.

At first, she worked with the organization that coordinated the short-term mission trips. Then she met Nick. He came for a mission trip, and they started dating when he returned the next summer. They were married in September 2020. "It was through that godly partnership that God revealed to me that it was time to start Go Love," Leitten reflected. "God gave me a very specific vision for non-industrialized, family-styled homes for orphaned and abandoned children here."

In a year's time, they raised funds and acquired documentation to open two children's homes, which they are renting. The Leittens serve as foster parents, and

they employ several women from their church, who are called aunts, to help care for the children.

Leitten is reminded of the many ways Gardner-Webb developed and prepared her to lead Go Love. "I find myself referring to techniques, trainings and skills learned through this degree on a daily basis when equipping our local team of teachers, caregivers, and support staff in Peru," she said.

They took a step toward growing the ministry by securing permanent property and have started fundraising to build homes there. Building apartments for the children who age out of care at 18 is also part of their vision, as well as a school and karate facility.

Gardner-Webb also shaped her leadership, event planning, and fundraising skills—and the lasting relationships built then continue to support her life and mission work in Peru today.



Scan the QR code to see more of the story.

"A good leader is the product of many good leaders pouring into them."

Connor Settlemyre

A Note Above: Connor Settlemyre's Journey in Music and Mentorship

Award-winning Graduate
Becomes GWU's First Student
Chosen for National Ensemble

BY JACKIE BRIDGES

As Gardner-Webb University May 2025 graduate Connor Settlemyre embarks on his new position as band director at South Point High School in Gastonia, N.C., he has many examples of great leaders to imitate. Like his parent, he is a percussionist and was influenced by her interest in music along with his relative and sibling. Then, the sincerity and passion of his high school band director inspired him to become a music educator.

At Gardner-Webb, the Department of Music faculty also modeled effective leadership while helping him develop his talents. They played a role in Settlemyre's decision to attend GWU too. "After my audition for the department, I received a handwritten letter from Dr. Eric Johnson welcoming me into the department," Settlemyre shared. "I actually still have



this letter and keep it on my desk to this day. The student-faculty relationships that I knew would develop strongly pulled me towards Gardner-Webb.”

Settlemyre earned a Bachelor of Arts in music education with a minor in youth discipleship studies. At the May 2025 graduation ceremony, he won the Most Outstanding Graduate Medal, an honor voted on by the faculty to recognize leadership, citizenship and academic excellence.

“A good leader is the product of many good leaders pouring into them,” Settlemyre reflected. “Leaders are selfless and desire group success rather than personal gain. A good leader listens, communicates clearly, makes thoughtful decisions, and brings out the strengths of a team. Leadership is not just about giving orders, rather it’s about setting an example, building trust, and empowering people to do their best.”

The sum of everything he learned from his mentors created a one-of-a-kind opportunity for him during his senior year. Settlemyre was selected to perform for the National Small Band Programs Intercollegiate Band. He became the first student from GWU to achieve this honor. Along with other college musicians from around the country, he performed at the 2025 National Conference of the College Band Directors National Association in Fort Worth, Texas.

“Being selected for this National Intercollegiate Honor Band truly feels like a capstone achievement for my collegiate career,” Settlemyre asserted. “Coming into Gardner-Webb as a 17-year-old freshman, I never really thought it would be a possibility to perform in a national ensemble. The music department faculty, especially Dr. (Sarah) Fabian, has poured countless hours into me, pushing me to improve every day.”



“Coming into Gardner-Webb as a 17-year-old freshman, I never really thought it would be a possibility to perform in a national ensemble. The music department faculty, especially Dr. (Sarah) Fabian, has poured countless hours into me, pushing me to improve every day.”

Connor Settlemyre



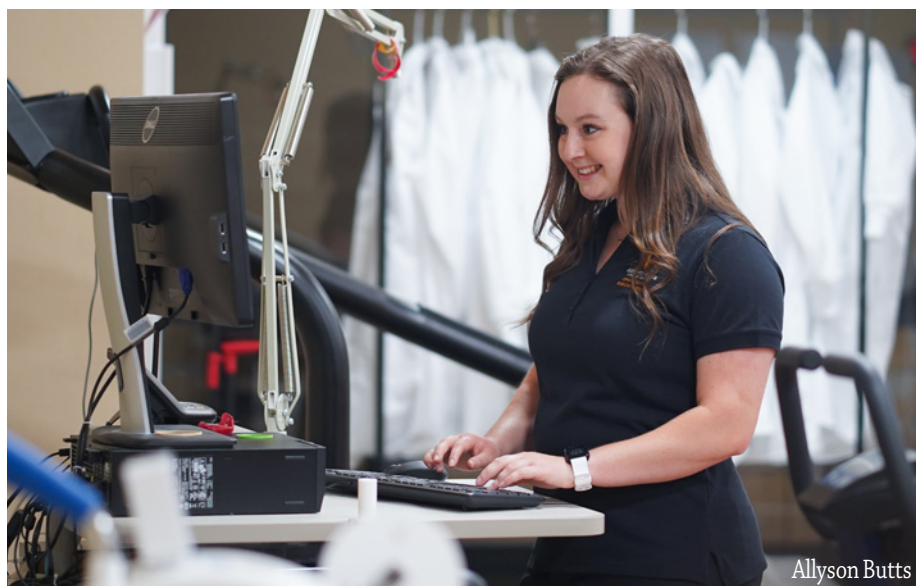
Fabian, Gardner-Webb director of Bands, traveled with Settlemyre to the conference. “I am incredibly proud of Connor for his dedication, hard work, and leadership over the past three years I have known him,” Fabian praised. “From day one, he has gone above and beyond to refine his skills, constantly seeking opportunities to grow both as a musician and as a leader within our music department. His selection to perform in the National Honor Band is a testament to his passion, perseverance and exceptional talent.”

Once he was chosen, Settlemyre received music excerpts to practice and recorded videos of himself performing. Before the event he was told he would sit as fourth chair percussionist in the national ensemble. On the day of the concert, after practicing 72 hours and getting to know the other musicians from around the country, Settlemyre was ready for the audience to hear the music.

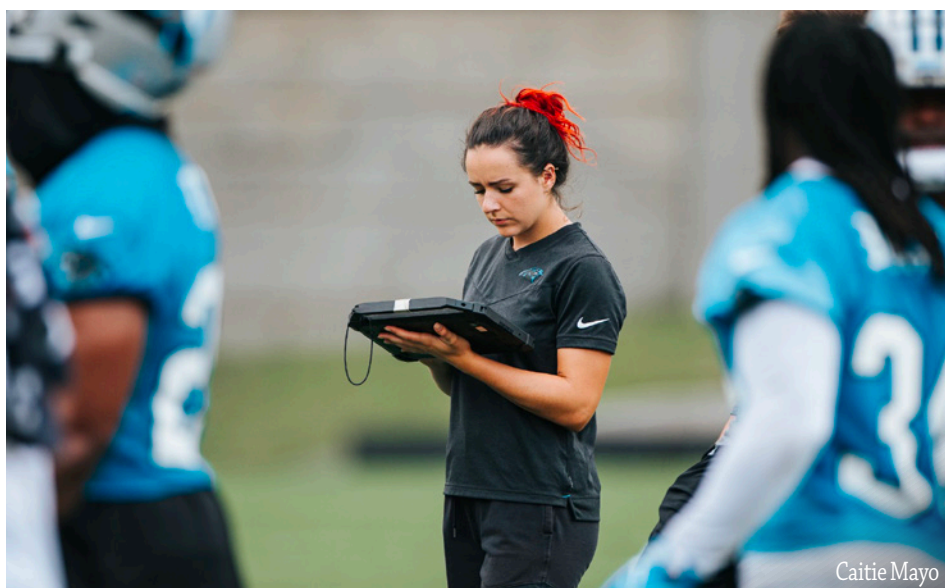
The experience taught him techniques to improve as a performer, and an educator. “I learned so much from our conductor about how to captivate a group,” Settlemyre affirmed. “He did a fantastic job at keeping us engaged despite the long hours of rehearsal. This experience was life changing, and I will never forget it. I also want to thank Dr. Fabian for believing in me enough to even bring this possibility to me. Dr. Fabian has been with me every step of my collegiate career since she arrived at Gardner-Webb, and I am forever grateful for the impact she has left on my life. I also want to thank the music department for supporting me on this crazy journey. None of this would have been possible without the support of the faculty.”



Kristen Plateau



Allyson Butts



Caitie Mayo



Macy Falls

Strengthening the World One Woman at a Time

Four Gardner-Webb Alumnae Gain Respect in Strength & Conditioning Field

BY JACKIE BRIDGES

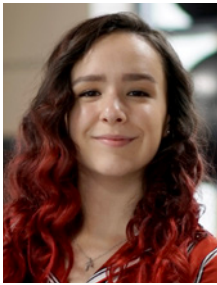
In a field dominated by men, four Gardner-Webb University alumnae are changing perceptions and gaining respect. As graduates of the Bachelor of Science in exercise science and Master of Science in strength and conditioning (S&C) programs at Gardner-Webb, they join the small percentage of women in America who are employed in top-level S&C jobs.

The article “Experiences and Perceptions of Women S&C Coaches: A Scoping Review” published by “International Sport Coaching Journal” in January 2022, stated that within the NCAA Division I—considered the highest level of intercollegiate athletics in the United States—only 15.7 percent of employed S&C coaches are women.

The Gardner-Webb trailblazers are:

CAITIE MAYO

'21 and '22—Athletic Performance Coach for Olympic Sports at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.



Caitie Mayo

Mayo played volleyball and was a graduate assistant and S&C intern while at Gardner-Webb. She was a sports performance coach/sports scientist for

Charlotte FC Academy before obtaining her job at Baylor. Mayo stated, "The exercise science program played a key role in my development as a professional in learning how to collaborate, communicate, and most importantly, provide a high level of training for each student-athlete."

Through her work in the NFL and Major League Soccer, she learned the importance of authenticity. Mayo acknowledged, "We do not need to 'act like a man' or try to 'act tough.' We can demand respect through the quality of our work and consistently holding ourselves and our athletes to the highest standard. We will be challenged and asked why more often, however over time, my work and professionalism will speak for itself. I have been blessed to work in environments where I am treated with the utmost respect."

When Flateau began her career in S&C, she worked with football teams at GWU, Elon University and Coastal Carolina University. At times, she proved herself by demonstrating a movement or exercise that was out of her comfort zone. "Once the players

KRISTEN FLATEAU

'22 and '23—S&C Coach at D1 Training in Fort Myers, Fla.



Kristen Flateau

knew I was as bought into the program as they were, they treated me as the coach that I was and gave me the respect they gave everyone else," Flateau asserted.

Because the Department of Exercise Science faculty have backgrounds in physical therapy, teaching, athletic training, and nutrition, Flateau received a well-rounded education. "The Gardner-Webb exercise science program went above and beyond preparing me for success, from learning how to talk to an athlete and building a comprehensive training program to writing professional emails," Flateau affirmed.



Macy Falls

appointments, and many check ins, I realized there was a disconnect between what my surgeon, physical therapist, and team athletic trainer were saying," Falls related. "I was inspired to enter the S&C field because I truly believe this field is one of the most often overlooked, yet necessary, areas of sport

ALLYSON BUTTS

'23 and '24—Lead strength coach at Architech Sports & Physical Therapy in Charlotte, N.C.

performance and overall well-being. We serve as what I would have considered to be the 'connection' between my surgery and proper preparation to return to the sport I loved."

At TOPTEAM Sports Performance, Falls has co-workers who support and encourage her. "Any doubt that I've received firsthand typically goes away after pride has been set aside, so I think that the main thing for me is just being confident in myself and trusting in God's plan for my life," Falls reflected.



Allyson Butts

Butts entered Gardner-Webb with the goal of pursuing physical therapy. However, she changed her focus after GWU Professor

Dr. Jonathan Ahearn explained the connection between it and S&C. As the lead strength coach at Architech, she partners with physical therapists to create a plan for injured athletes to return to sports safely.

She appreciates the S&C positions that are opening up for women. "One of the exciting things about being a female strength coach in this decade is that across the board, women are playing a larger role in organized sport," Butts acknowledged. "Athletes don't care about my age, appearance, athletic history, or gender, because I provide excellent, evidence-based training and care for them as individuals."



Witness to History

Dr. Steven Harmon's Scholarship on Christian Unity Leads to Covering Election of Pope Leo XIV

BY JACKIE BRIDGES

At 6:08 p.m. on May 8 in Rome, Gardner-Webb University professor of historical theology, Steven Harmon, sat in the Holy See Press Office keeping an eye on the “chimney cam.” When white smoke appeared a few seconds later, he sprinted outside. “I jumped a couple of barricades (the press badge lets you get away with a lot here) to get into the middle of the street leading out into the square,” Harmon wrote in his “Vatican

Dispatch” for Good Faith Media.

Harmon’s eyewitness account of the papal conclave and the opportunity to cover this history-making event was the culmination of years of research, writing and dialogue on ecumenism—the effort to seek unity among different and often-divided Christian traditions.

Whether reporting from the Vatican, preaching from the pulpit, teaching behind a lectern or writing a scholarly book or article, his goal has always been the same:

Unity in the body of Christ.

“I’m seeking to help people be more intentional about being more honest with each other about our differences,” Harmon asserted. “Not so we can figure out who’s right and who’s wrong, but so that we can recognize what we do have in common that we can build upon as a foundation.”

A prolific author, Harmon received the Scholarship Faculty Award in 2024-25. Since 2003, he has authored five books and edited two, and two more volumes will

be available soon. He is co-editor of the forthcoming “The Oxford Handbook of Baptist Studies” from Oxford University Press, and his book, “Vision Over Visibility: U2’s Theological Imagination,” is under contract with Cascade Books.

His scholarly work led to an invitation to participate in international meetings between the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) and the Catholic Church. Through these ongoing Baptist-Catholic dialogues, Harmon met Pope Benedict and Pope Francis, and caught glimpses of the men behind the titles.

Pope Benedict was a theologian at heart, Harmon shared. When the group mentioned they had read and discussed one of his commentaries, “he leaned forward in his chair, his eyes brightened, and he was not the pope,” Harmon described. “He was a career academic, who had just realized that this many decades later, someone was actually reading something he had written.”

At the first meeting with Pope Francis, he asked the Baptist leaders to pray for him and for unity among the body of believers in Christ. The second meeting in 2022 happened after the Argentinian soccer team advanced to the World Cup

finals. “When he came into the audience hall, (Pope Francis) recognized a Catholic theologian from Argentina and he said, ‘Jorge, we did well, didn’t we?’” Harmon related. Pope Francis also accepted a copy of Harmon’s book, “Baptists, Catholics, and the Whole Church: Partners in the Pilgrimage to Unity.”

When Pope Francis became ill in February 2025, Harmon was asked by Baptist World Global and Spectrum Local



News to share his thoughts and prayers for the pope.

Two months later, as the world mourned the pope’s death, Harmon again shared his memories and analysis with news outlets across the country. He was intrigued with the possibility of reporting from Rome on the papal conclave and pitched the idea to Mitch Randall, the executive director of Good Faith Media.

Randall liked the idea, and they applied for temporary media credentials, made travel arrangements, and Harmon arrived in Rome on May 4. Harmon provided analysis based on his studies and meetings with Catholic leaders. Such as the Second Vatican Council that met in the early 1960s. “Those who held almost dissenting perspectives were not excommunicated; they were making contributions to the formulation of Catholic doctrine through their disagreement on the way to finding agreement,” Harmon stated.

Pope Francis’ The Synod on Synodality is another example. Harmon defined it as a “theological way to talk about a church being on the path together toward God’s intentions for the church and for the world.” He added, “They’ve been emphasizing a church that listens to all voices.”

In Pope Leo’s speech from the balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica—just an hour after the conclave released white smoke—he used the word, synodal. “It was quite striking,” Harmon observed. “It was clear that the pre-conclave conversations wanted a church that was synodal in that way. They wanted someone who would continue the trajectory of Pope Francis, and it seems clear that is what they did in electing Robert Francis Prevost as Pope Leo XIV.”

Avery Copeland contributed to this story.



Listen to Harmon’s story on the
GWU Podcasting Network.



Guiding Generations

Pam Scruggs Reflects on 45 Years of Transformative Service

After 45 years of unwavering service, Pam Scruggs retired from Gardner-Webb University in spring 2025, leaving behind a profound legacy marked by

leadership, mentorship, and steadfast devotion to the student-athletes she served. Honored with emeritus status—a rare and distinguished recognition—Scruggs departs as one

of the University's longest-serving staff members.

Joining Gardner-Webb in 1980 as an administrative assistant to Athletics Director Dan Moore, Scruggs quickly

"I always felt like this is where the Lord wanted me to be; this is home."

Pam Scruggs

became a cornerstone of the athletics department. Though she briefly stepped away to work in food services, she returned to athletics in the mid-1980s, ultimately rising to associate athletics director and senior women's administrator. Her impact spanned decades and touched countless lives.

"I always felt like this is where the Lord wanted me to be," Scruggs reflected. "This is home."

Over the years, Scruggs became synonymous with Gardner-Webb Athletics. Known for her calm demeanor, attention to detail, and remarkable dependability, she was the department's go-to person. Whether solving complex logistics or offering quiet mentorship, Scruggs' leadership was felt by student-athletes and colleagues alike.

"Being calm helps," she said. "Approaching things level-headed lets you handle situations the best way possible. And if you're going to do something, do it—and do it well."

Nowhere was her influence more visible than in women's athletics. As senior women's administrator, she guided young female athletes through the rigors of sport and scholarship, celebrating their growth on and off the field. "It's hard to be a student-athlete," she acknowledged. "But to watch those young women succeed—balancing games, travel, academics—it says a lot about what they've learned at Gardner-Webb."

**Honored with
emeritus status—
a rare and distinguished
recognition—Scruggs departs
as one of the University's
longest-serving
staff members.**

One former volleyball player stands out in her memory—a student she once feared wouldn't graduate. "She was headed down the wrong road," Scruggs recalled. "But I spent time with her, listened. Now she has a family of her own, and her children are preparing



Pam Scruggs with Athletic Director Emeritus, Chuck Burch.

for college. That's the reward—seeing them thrive."

In 2009, Gardner-Webb inducted her into its Athletics Hall of Fame. She also received the Paris Yelton Memorial Award in 2015 for her service to community sports and was named GWU Staff Member of the Year. Perhaps most meaningful is the

annual Pam Scruggs Student-Athlete Advisory Committee Leadership Award, given to student-athletes who embody the character and commitment Scruggs exemplified.

"It's humbling," she said. "I hope long after I'm gone, students will see that name and understand how much I loved this place."

Her relationships with faculty mentors like the late Dr. Barry Hambright and Dr. Tony Eastman inspired her own approach to mentorship. "They left a lasting impression on me," she shared. "I've tried to pass that on."

One of Scruggs' proudest memories came during the historic 2022–23 season, when the Gardner-Webb women's basketball team delivered a performance for the ages. The team captured both the Big South Conference regular season and tournament titles, becoming the first basketball team—men's or women's—in Big South Conference history to complete league play undefeated. Their dominance extended beyond the record books, earning the team a wave of accolades including Big South Player of the Year, Coach of the Year, and multiple all-conference selections. For Scruggs, the experience was unforgettable. "Maybe because I'm female," she laughed, "But that moment was glorious. To witness it—just incredible."

Though officially retired, Scruggs' legacy continues in the culture she helped shape and the student lives she helped transform. When asked how she'd like to be remembered, she said: "Dependable. Faithful. Encouraging. Grateful."

For Gardner-Webb, Pam Scruggs is all those things—and more.



The Past Has a Future

Emeritus Recognition Caps Dr. David Yelton's 35-Year Journey of Scholarship and Service at GWU

BY JACKIE BRIDGES

On the last day of class in History 331, Gardner-Webb University professor of history Dr. David Yelton handed each student a thank you note. Mostly history majors, they had given him a retirement party the week

before. This gesture spoke volumes about Yelton's devotion to his students during his 35 years at the University. "I will say that nothing is more meaningful to me as a professor than having a student express their appreciation for my efforts to help them grow in knowledge, ability

and confidence," Yelton shared. "That's why I've spent some 92 semesters in higher education."

In teaching the value of communication, critical-thinking skills, and researching a question or problem, Yelton was a champion for academic integrity. He played an

"I will say that nothing is more meaningful to me as a professor than having a student express their appreciation for my efforts to help them grow in knowledge, ability and confidence."

Dr. David Yelton

instrumental role in the creation of the Academic Honesty Policy, helping create a system to track, identify and, as warranted, punish repeat offenders.

At his retirement, Yelton was named professor emeritus of history for his years of service and contributions to Gardner-Webb. When the announcement was made, the faculty responded with a standing ovation. "That was as much of a reward that I could have asked for—they were essentially saying you did a good job," Yelton said. "Coming from your colleagues, it makes all the struggles along the way worth it."

Yelton, a Rutherford County, N.C., native, applied for a position at Gardner-Webb in 1990. A one-year commitment, he was asked to stay when professor Dr. Gil Blackburn moved into administration. Yelton established himself as a faculty leader, serving as coordinator for Secondary Education Social Studies Teacher Licensure from 1992 to 2012, chair of the department from 2002-07, chair of the faculty from 2007-09, and assistant provost for Arts & Sciences from 2016-20. He was also a member of the groups that built the Professional Readiness Experience (PRE) and that established the information literacy requirement.

Yelton's professor at Appalachian State, Dr. Rennie Brantz, inspired him to become a college professor and further developed his childhood fascination with German history. After earning his bachelor's in history from Appalachian State, Yelton received his master's (1985) and Ph.D. (1990) from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He narrowed his focus to examine the citizen militia of Nazi Germany. "I selected it as a dissertation topic because at that time it had never been thoroughly studied," Yelton offered. "Once I began researching the topic, I found that there had been little work in English on the German perspective of the end of the war."



Yelton is the author of two books, "Hitler's Volkssturm: The Nazi Militia and the Fall of Germany 1944-45" (University Press of Kansas, 2002) and "Hitler's Home Guard: Volkssturmmann, Western Front, 1944-1945" (Osprey Publishing, 2006), and in 2020 he received the Vandervort Prize from the "Journal of Military History" for his article "Older German Officers and National Socialist Activism: Evidence from the German Volkssturm," published in the April 2019 issue. "To have it recognized as expanding our knowledge of the Third Reich made all the long and tedious hours of research, writing and editing more than worthwhile," Yelton related. "It's an affirmation of knowing that your scholarly work is appreciated by your peers and an acknowledgement that your work makes a difference. Vandervort was the editor who approved the draft of

this article with the recommendation of several readers, so that adds to the honor."

Yelton emphasized to his students the value of examining a topic, and knowing how to conduct in-depth research are essential skills that go beyond history majors.

"One of the key things studying history does is to give you a broader perspective of time," Yelton observed. "American culture is notoriously short-term oriented. Businesspeople always talk about the next quarter. One of the basic skills you need in any profession is to be able to step back from things and have a more strategic longer-term perspective. History forces you into doing that. Everything is connected; history is just a long chain of causes and results."



Listen to Yelton's story and more on the GWU Podcasting Network.



Led by Faith, Lifted by Community

Tucker Scholar Kylee Morris
Reflects on Finding her
Purpose at Gardner-Webb

BY JACKIE BRIDGES

When senior Kylee Morris shares her journey to Gardner-Webb University, her faith in God is evident. With her confident demeanor, engaging smile and intuitive responses, Morris won the favor of judges and became the third recipient of Gardner-Webb's highest honor for incoming undergraduate students, the Tucker Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength Scholarship.

Like the verses from Mark's gospel, which are the basis of the scholarship, Morris "loves the Lord her God with all her heart, soul, mind and strength; and loves her neighbor as herself."

She believes God led her to find Gardner-Webb through an internet search, and He blessed her with the Tucker Scholarship. "Your life can change in such a good way in a split second," Morris stated. "I was so overwhelmed with the fact that I was able to pursue my dreams and further my education without having this worry of financial burden. God opened the door."

Arriving on campus, Morris was excited to explore the academic and extracurricular opportunities. An athlete and a musician in high school, she decided to participate in music ensembles and joined the percussion section of

the revived Gardner-Webb Marching Bulldogs, led by Dr. Sarah Fabian. “The band really has given me a family that I know I’m going to carry with me for such a long time, even after I leave,” Morris affirmed.

Morris’ schedule is full as a biology major, biomedical sciences concentration, with minors in chemistry and psychology. In addition, she is a teacher assistant in the chemistry lab. “It doesn’t really feel like work to me; it feels like play,” Morris related. “I love doing what I do.”

Morris chose biology to prepare for the medical field and possibly become a surgeon. Then, during her sophomore year, she started wondering about other options in the medical field. Feeling like God planted the seed; she researched and found cytology.

The field immediately appealed to Morris, because her classes in microbiology and organic chemistry had sparked her interest in the laboratory setting. Shortly after reading about cytology, Morris was introduced to alumna Celsea Reeder, who visited the science department to share about her studies in cytotechnology, the microscopic study of cells. “It felt like a confirmation,” said Morris.

Besides juggling band and academic commitments, Morris also has a small business, “Kylee Creates.” She makes crafts out of rubber bands. A hobby she started in elementary school, she picked it up again after she joined the Art Club at GWU. The craft has been a creative outlet for her.

Morris branched out in other ways this past year, experiencing a hundred-foot bungee free fall, whitewater rafting, and entering and winning the Miss GWU pageant. When she won, Morris vaguely remembers being crowned and walking across the stage. “The only voice I heard was my mom,” she reflected. “I look out and see my mom and my grandparents, and they’re all crying.”

The people who lead the pageant are some of her biggest supporters on campus, especially Jessika Raduly, associate director in the Office of Student Engagement. “Jess is a mom at heart, and the students here are her kids,” Morris described. “She does anything she can to make sure they are well looked after, and they are loved. She’s someone who can always bring light even if you’re in the middle of something dark, and she always lets you know, ‘I’m praying for you.’”

Raduly fits Morris’ definition of a leader—someone who uses their resources and their influence to help people reach a common goal. “Leadership isn’t about stepping on anyone’s toes or

About the Tucker Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength Scholarship

The award includes full-tuition, room and board for eight semesters. Carolyn and Robert Tucker created the scholarship in 2019 to annually recognize a high school senior who exemplifies the principles and values representative of the Gardner-Webb community. Longtime benefactors of Gardner-Webb, the Tuckers gave \$5.5 million to help build the Tucker Student Center. The qualifications are based on the Tucker family’s life verse, Mark 12:30-31. In this passage, Jesus gives the two most important commandments: “Love the Lord Your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength; and love your neighbor as yourself.”



stepping over someone else; it’s pulling people up with you,” she noted.

Morris is thankful for all the people who contribute to the campus atmosphere of belonging. “Everyone here who is on a walk with Christ, no matter where they’re at, they’re given a space to be on that walk,” she said. “I’m just so thankful for all of the things I’ve been able to experience. God has really shown

me over this last year that He is working ... He is moving and He is making His presence known. This campus is truly so wonderful, because they follow that mission: for God and for humanity, and it truly is something so special.”



Listen to Kylee tell her story here.

Securing His Future

Ignite Scholar Issa Cogdell Pursues Dream of Entrepreneurship

BY MAKELLA KNOWLES, INTERN FOR UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS

“**A**lways strive for the greater—for you, and everyone around you,” said Issa Cogdell, a junior at Gardner-Webb University, who serves others in various ways on the GWU campus and in the community.

A computer science major with a minor in cybersecurity, Cogdell’s goal is to eventually open his own cybersecurity firm. Originally an accounting major, Cogdell switched to the tech field after a friend shared his successful experience in cybersecurity. His friend also knew that Cogdell had been interested in working with computers since his seventh grade coding and entrepreneurship class.

A winner of the Ignite Scholarship at Gardner-Webb, Cogdell has been able to harness his computer skills into a career path. Growing up watching his parent’s hard work and determination has kept him strongly devoted to his classes in the Department of Mathematical and Computer Sciences. He names assistant professor Oscar Gonzalez



and professor Dr. Mirek Mystkowski as the two faculty members who have encouraged him the most in his academic journey. Gonzalez explains topics to his students with a practical approach, and Cogdell credits him as the one who has further inspired him to pursue the field.

Despite his demanding academic schedule, Cogdell is involved in a wide range of beneficial clubs and organizations. Being a member of the Searight Professional and Continuing Education (PACE) Leadership Certificate Program affords him not only career advancement opportunities but also emphasizes volunteerism.

Through the program, Cogdell started a digital library outreach using QR codes. He came up with the idea after working as a summer camp counselor. "I noticed that one of the kids couldn't read," he explained. "It stayed on my mind, and I started thinking, 'How could I help?'"

Cogdell decided QR codes would be the best way to provide access to free online age-appropriate books. Offering this resource allows churches and other ministries to provide this service in their communities.

His mentors in the PACE Leadership Certificate Program, Gardner-Webb professor of economics and international business, Dr. Anthony Negbenebor, and program founder, the Rev. Johnny Searight, also told Cogdell about the Management and Leadership of Tomorrow (MLT) Career Prep Class of 2027. He applied and was selected to attend the MLT Tech Trek in San Francisco, Calif., to gain industry insights, connections, and support. "It was an amazing experience," Cogdell said. "I was able to explore the Bloomberg San Francisco office and connect with recruiters and professionals from Deloitte, BlackRock, Autodesk, TikTok and Dell. It was a pleasure to meet and engage with all these companies to see the ways I can prepare, engage and improve myself professionally."



Cogdell is also a member of Men of Impact, another club on campus that offers professional career advancement, networking opportunities, and organizes volunteer events. In April, he received a plaque in recognition of his participation in the program.

"This program has been a phenomenal opportunity to build meaningful connections that have played a significant role in helping me reach where I am today," Cogdell stated. "Additionally, the chance to give back and serve my community through this program has been truly rewarding. From our efforts to clean up the local park, creating a safe and welcoming environment for children and families, to our exciting plans for next year, Men of Impact has made a lasting impression on me."

A new addition to Cogdell's schedule is participation in Ethics Bowl with assistant professor of Religious Studies Dr. Anna Sieges-Beal. The Ethics Bowl team researches contemporary topics and debates them in a competition with teams

from other independent colleges in North Carolina. Another important group to him is the Black Student Association. In this community of friends and peers, Cogdell says he has found a home away from home.

With such a demanding schedule, Cogdell makes sure to stay accountable, partnering with his friends and classmates to stay on top of his schoolwork. After earning his degree, Cogdell hopes to go straight into the workforce. Through the Searight PACE program, he has obtained many of the certifications needed for his field, setting him up for success.

He also realizes that personal success comes with responsibilities. "A leader is someone who looks after everybody else," Cogdell asserted. "You have to be selfless to be a leader. You have to be willing to go the extra mile to make sure everyone else is situated around you and then, make sure goals are accomplished."

Makella Knowles, of Indian Trail, N.C., graduated in May 2025 with a degree in English and minors in Spanish and marketing.

BULLDOGNATION



Title Taken. Standard Set.

With a Big South Championship and NCAA Win, Gardner-Webb Men's Soccer Enters a New Era of Contention

Gardner-Webb University's men's soccer team etched its name in the history books with a thrilling 2024 campaign that culminated in its first-ever Big South Conference Tournament Championship and a berth in the NCAA Division I Men's Soccer Championship—the program's first since 2006.

The Runnin' Bulldogs blazed through the season, beginning with an impressive 6-0-1 run, including a 3-1 triumph over Atlantic Coast Conference titan Wake Forest, who went on to win the ACC title and reach the NCAA Elite Eight. Gardner-Webb went unbeaten at home

and delivered High Point University its only two conference losses of the season—once during regular play and again in the conference championship.

Led by second-year head coach Scott Wells, the Bulldogs posted a record-breaking 13-4-3 overall record. The team achieved the most wins in program history and completed its Big South schedule undefeated (5-0-2), a feat unmatched since joining the league in 2007. The offense was electric, topping the conference with 35 goals, while the defense anchored the campaign with a league-best six shutouts.

Wells, who was instrumental in guiding



eight players to Big South All-Conference honors—a program high—expressed pride and confidence in the team's future. "I am proud that today I can say with conviction that I have signed with a national contender," Wells affirmed. "I have commented repeatedly about building sustained success, so my time here at Gardner-Webb is far from done."

Several Bulldogs earned individual accolades in Men's Soccer from the Big South:

First-Team All-Conference

Elias Khodri, Jr.
Leo Andrade, Jr.
Max Fisher, Soph.

Second-Team All-Conference

Lucas Mauro, Gr.
Giampaolo Nardi, Jr.
Breno Correia, Soph.
Caio Hughes, Sr.

All-Freshman Team

Jesper Vikman, Fr.

All-Academic Team and Scholar-Athlete of the Year

Giampaolo Nardi, Jr.

In the Big South Tournament, Gardner-Webb blanked Presbyterian 2-0 at home to remain unbeaten on their turf. The championship showdown saw the Bulldogs head to High Point and emerge victorious, stunning the top-seeded Panthers with a 2-1 win to clinch the title and automatic NCAA berth.

The team learned of its NCAA Tournament destination during the Selection Show, cheered on by an enthusiastic crowd in Tucker Student Center. GWU drew Oregon State in Corvallis, Ore., where senior midfielder Caio Hughes netted the game-winning goal in the 72nd minute. The Bulldogs' defense held firm for a memorable 1-0 upset over the Beavers.

The magical run ended in the second round against No. 3 Denver, but the Bulldogs' momentum carried into the offseason. In December 2024, Wells signed a multi-year contract extension, reinforcing the program's national ambitions.

The 2024 season will be remembered not just for the wins, but for the standard it set. Gardner-Webb men's soccer is no longer building—it's arrived.

GWUsports.com contributed to this report.

Courting Dominance

Unbeaten in Conference Play, Men's Tennis Take Big South by Storm with NCAA Bid

The Gardner-Webb University men's tennis team capped off a landmark year by capturing its first-ever Big South Tournament Championship, a triumph that secured the Runnin' Bulldogs a coveted spot in the 2025 NCAA Division I Men's Tennis National Championships in Waco, Texas.

This momentous win came on April 18, when freshman standout Boyd Schreiber clinched the title with a 6-5, 6-1 victory over UNC Asheville's Trevor Gray. Schreiber, in his debut season, was named the tournament's Most Valuable Player, providing a thrilling glimpse into the future of GWU tennis.

Guided by Head Coach Mike Griffith—who earned his third consecutive and fourth overall Big South Coach of the Year honor—the Bulldogs achieved a rare and historic double, winning both the regular season and tournament championships. It marked the program's third consecutive regular-season title and the first time both titles were won in the same year.

The team posted an impressive 20-4 overall record, including a perfect 9-0 mark in conference play and a stunning 18-0 run at home over the past two seasons. Their fortress, the Webb Tennis Complex, has become one of the toughest venues in the region.

"This championship means everything to our program," Griffith said. "It's for the alumni, the current players, and everyone who's believed in us. We've built something special here."

Though their NCAA Tournament journey ended in the first round against top-ranked Wake Forest—the eventual national champions—the Runnin' Bulldogs left an indelible mark on



the national scene. They earned their highest-ever final national ranking at No. 75 and climbed to No. 8 in the highly competitive Carolina region.

Senior leadership was key to the team's ascent. Eduardo Dias, Numa Lemieux-Monette, and Alex Lepine wrapped their collegiate careers with a combined dual-match record of 68-27 and a dominant 33-6 mark at home. Dias earned back-to-back Big South Player of the Year honors, while Lemieux-Monette joined him in capturing singles and doubles titles at the conference's inaugural Fall Individual Championships.

First-year student Alexandre Bergeron added to the program's future promise by earning Big South Freshman of the Year honors.

This historic campaign has elevated Gardner-Webb men's tennis to new heights and inspired a community. With passion, pride and perseverance, the Runnin' Bulldogs are building a legacy that promises even greater achievements ahead.

Brains, Baskets, and Big South Titles

Hawkins, Motekaityte Earn Top Honors for GWU Women's Basketball

The Gardner-Webb University women's basketball team earned multiple postseason honors following a stellar 2024-25 season. Leading the way was senior guard Ashley Hawkins, who was named the 2024-25 Big South Player of the Year and earned First Team All-Big South recognition.

Hawkins, a Long Beach, Calif., native and May 2025 graduate, led both Gardner-Webb and the Big South Conference in scoring, assists, and minutes played. She averaged 19.0

points, 4.8 assists, and 35.9 minutes per game, starting every contest for the Runnin' Bulldogs.

One of her most memorable performances came on Dec. 20, 2024, against Queens University, where she scored a program-record 47 points—also a season-high across all of NCAA women's basketball. Hawkins achieved a rare milestone by surpassing 1,000 career points in both her Division I and GWU careers in back-to-back games to close the regular season. She previously



Ashley Hawkins





Elze Motekaityte

earned First Team All-Big South honors in 2023-24 and was named the Big South Preseason Player of the Year entering this season.

Graduate forward Elze Motekaityte also garnered major recognition, being named to the Big South All-Academic Team and earning the title of Big South Scholar-Athlete of the Year. Originally at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU), Motekaityte completed her bachelor's degree in management with a 3.9 GPA before transferring to Gardner-Webb. While pursuing her MBA, she maintained a perfect 4.0 GPA.

On the court, Motekaityte played a key role for the Runnin' Bulldogs, averaging 9.5 points and 7.8 rebounds per game. Her ability to excel both academically and athletically made her a standout leader on and off the court.

Together, Hawkins and Motekaityte exemplified the excellence and determination that define Gardner-Webb athletics, helping to elevate the program and inspire teammates through their achievements.



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Paced by Grace

Jessica Perriello's
Cross-Country Journey
Redefines Resilience
& Belonging

BY MAKELLA KNOWLES, INTERN
FOR UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS

Thump, thump, thump—the sound of anxiously beating hearts is reflected in the striking of running shoes hitting packed grass. It's a rhythm of sounds matching the pattern of frantic breath from the runners in those shoes: in through the nose, out through the mouth.

The cacophony is completed by roller rink tunes filling the air of Furman University's golf course, mixing with shouts and cheers from the crowd. There are clusters of tents scattered across the course, filled with everything from dogs to babies. I'm overwhelmed by the sights and sounds of

my first cross-country meet, but I'm eager to support my school and my roommate, Jessica Perriello.

A senior majoring in graphic design, Perriello has been on Gardner-Webb University's track and cross-country team since her first year. A typical practice day lasts two to three hours. The runners begin each morning with stretching, 1 1/2 to 2 miles of warm-up laps, a workout, and a cooldown run of another 1 1/2 to 2 miles. And that's all before class! The coaches mix in easy days (50-minute runs at a consistent pace), depending on whether they have a meet that weekend. Weight training is woven around the practice schedule, creating a six-day training week with only Sundays reserved for rest.

Perriello had her best season yet running cross-country with Gardner-Webb. She is the first to achieve Cross Country All-Conference Athlete since Gardner-Webb turned Division I two decades ago. She was third in the 800-meter indoor at the Big South Conference meet and made the final in the 800 at the outdoor Big South meet. She also received second-team honors and an All-Academic team award.

When detailing her running history, Perriello uses the term "toxic relationship" to describe how she used to feel about the sport. "It's because of the push and pull," Perriello says. The dynamic of mental and physical exhaustion versus mental and physical reward used to be unbalanced for her, but she is learning to put less pressure on herself and take time to enjoy the gift the Lord has given her: "It's not a chore, it's a gift!"

In fall 2023, everything changed for Perriello. Her team was getting ready to go into the indoor running season but unfortunately, she had suffered a knee injury earlier in the year and was just cleared to begin working out again. She arrived at practice and began running

her usual laps when the injury flared up causing her leg excruciating pain. Disheartened, she met with her coach after practice. "Don't let this injury define you or running define who you are," Head Coach Gregory Thiel said. "You are more than that. You make running, running doesn't make you."

Moving forward, Perriello used her coach's statement to fuel her motivation and begin her recovery process with increased hope. She joined her teammates in the indoor season last year and has not suffered an injury since.



**Jessica Perriello's
GWU All-Time Performances:**

Outdoor:

Third all-time in women's 800-meter.

Third all-time in women's 1500-meter.

Part of the third all-time women's 4x8 team.

Indoor:

Fourth all-time in the women's 500-meter dash.

School record holder 600-meter.

Second all-time in the indoor 800-meter.

Distance Medley Relay,
2024-2025 Season Record Holder.

Once it clicked that running didn't define her, she was able to mentally change the relationship to a positive one.

"Jessica is a coach's dream athlete: hardworking, respectful, and fierce competitor," Coach Thiel said. "She's always challenging herself to be better. Jessica is a fantastic teammate, always willing to encourage and help others. She has strong faith that is displayed in how she interacts and builds others up and trusts in our Lord."

Likewise, I saw her determination and dedication firsthand at the meet I attended, and I had the privilege of meeting Jess' family. Their warmth was so inviting; her dad made jokes, and her mom was so excited to see me. It was like I had known them my whole life.

"Jess, you were amazing!" I gush, giving her a huge hug.

"She PRed you know," her dad says proudly. "Be sure to get that down for that article you're writing!"

I pause, racking my brain for the correct terminology definition. Oh, right. Personal record! I smile, quickly responding with a laugh, "Oh, I will. She'll be on the front page!"

As I turn to leave, I catch snippets of conversations I know close to nothing about: running times, gear, and anecdotes of cross-country meets past. This new information floats around my mind, mixing with the bits and pieces of my roommate's running journey. The one thing that sticks out to me most is the presence of community. Teams gather for group photos. Parents draw their kids in for a hug. Teammates bring water to exhausted friends. There really is nothing like the community of Gardner-Webb.

Makella Knowles, of Indian Trail, N.C., graduated in May 2025 with a degree in English and minors in Spanish and marketing.

**This story has been edited for space consideration and style formatting.*



Gardner-Webb Receives \$1.85 Million Transformative Gift

Donation Enhances Athletics, Residence Halls and Academics

Gardner-Webb University has received one of the largest single contributions in the last 25 years—an initial \$1.75 million. Just one week later, the donors added an additional \$100,000, bringing the total to \$1.85 million. This generous donation will impact all areas of campus life.

“This transformative gift is a powerful affirmation of Gardner-Webb’s mission and the life-changing impact this institution has on our students and their families,” said Interim President Nate Evans. “It reflects not only deep gratitude but also great vision, investing in our facilities, academic programs, and student

life so that Gardner-Webb can continue to change lives. We are incredibly grateful for this generosity and inspired by the trust it places in our future.”

The \$1.85 million gift is funding a series of athletic, residential and academic enhancements—many of which are already completed or nearing completion. Over the summer, new turf was installed at Spangler Stadium, and the court in Paul Porter Arena has been replaced. A major renovation of Nanney Hall took place, along with updates to additional residence halls and apartments. The final portion of the gift is enhancing technology, equipment and computers for

the Department of Communication, Art and Design.

The donors were motivated to give because they saw the positive impact that the GWU community—faculty, staff and students—had on their son’s Christian walk. “Gardner-Webb is a unique and rare gem in higher education,” they said. “The school has blessed our son in a variety of ways. GWU offered an environment where he could thrive and grow both professionally and spiritually. He was also instrumental in identifying certain areas that would benefit from our financial support, and we wanted to honor that as well.”

They felt strongly about directly supporting the Gardner-Webb mission and encourage others to financially support the University. “God has his hand on GWU and this is evident every time we set foot on campus,” the donors said. “God’s calling to support GWU was an easy ‘YES.’ We hope that other families with the capacity to give will experience the same calling.”

With their contribution to Gardner-Webb, they wanted to bless the people who had become friends over the last four years. “Our son developed strong relationships with his peers, academic, administrative and coaching staffs,” the parents said. “We have developed meaningful relationships with some key administrators and have enjoyed our many visits to Shelby/Boiling Springs. We feel a real connection to GWU, and it’s all because of the people.”

Upgrades to Nanney and other residence halls will directly impact the daily lives of Gardner-Webb students, observed Vice

President for Student Development and Dean of Students Lesley Villarose. “We are excited about the transformation this will bring,” Villarose said. “The investment in new residence hall furniture is more than just a physical upgrade—it is an investment in the comfort, well-being, and community experience of our students. These refreshed living spaces will enhance students’ ability to rest, study, and connect with others, helping to create a true home away from home.”

The turf and basketball court upgrades will provide a foundation to improve the student-athletes’ experience. Interim Vice President of Athletics Chuck Burch noted the previous football turf was installed in 2014. “Turf fields usually last eight to 10 years, so our field has held up well considering how much we have used it,” Burch noted. “Replacing the turf and shock pad under the turf allows us to provide our student-athletes the safest environment possible.”

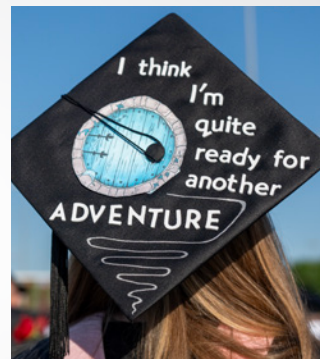
Additionally, Burch explained the need for a new arena court. The Runnin’ Bulldogs are playing on the same court surface since the Convocation Center opened in 1982. “After multiple sanding and refinishes, there were numerous dead spots throughout the court,” he stated.

The equipment for the Department of Communication, Art and Design will support numerous academic programs. Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences Dr. Jennifer Buckner assessed the gift’s impact. “This lab provides industry-standard technology that will support photography, videography and digital designs in a tech-forward learning environment, preparing students for future careers,” Buckner said. “We are excited to see how this lab enhances department strengths, such as our sports and commercial photography or our student-produced films for the International Real to Reel Festival.”



"This grant represents a significant milestone for Gardner-Webb and affirms the vital role we play in addressing behavioral health disparities across our region."

Interim GWU President Nate Evans



**Gardner-Webb
University**

A
Advancing

C
Collaborative
Care

E
Education

Gardner-Webb University Receives Federal Grant Totaling \$2.16M Over Four Years

Gardner-Webb's College of Health Sciences has received the University's first federally-funded grant. Presented by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the initial award is \$550,000, which is renewable for three years for a total of \$2.16 million. The funding will address behavioral health needs in rural and underserved areas through the Advancing

Collaborative Care, Integration, and Interprofessional Education in Rural North Carolina (ACE) project.

The purpose of the ACE project is to prepare Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP)-Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP), and Clinical Mental Health Counselor (CMHC) students to practice in integrated care sites and improve access to behavioral health

services for North Carolina. The University's staff and faculty worked with its grants consulting partner, McAllister & Quinn, to obtain the award.

"This grant represents a significant milestone for Gardner-Webb and affirms the vital role we play in addressing behavioral health disparities across our region," affirmed Interim GWU President Nate Evans. "It also underscores the

University's commitment to improving behavioral health outcomes in rural and underserved communities. I am incredibly proud of our faculty and staff for their dedication and leadership in bringing this project to fruition."

The proposed project will (1) build institutional infrastructure to support recruitment, teaching, and learning for a diverse clinical workforce; (2) enhance curricula and co-curricular activities to better prepare PMHNP and CMHC students to work in integrated care environments; and (3) expand clinical capacity for PMHNP and CMHC trainees in integrated care settings, with practice partners such as Atrium Health, CaroMont Behavioral Health, and Kintegra Behavioral Health.

By meeting its education and clinical objectives, the ACE project will propel the College of Health Sciences' capacity to prepare graduates to meet urgent behavioral health service needs in North Carolina. The organization of activities throughout the project period reflects a thoughtful approach of capacity building, planning, implementation, evaluation, and sustainability. The PMHNP and CMHC students will work and learn together with preceptors and supervisors in integrated care settings, providing a high-quality learning experience.

"We are grateful for the support of this grant, which enhances the education of the PMHNP and CMHC students through integrated experiential learning," shared Gardner-Webb Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Nicole Waters. "This opportunity equips students to serve in high-need areas while fostering a strong commitment to compassionate, collaborative care. I extend thanks to our dedicated faculty, whose leadership was instrumental in securing the grant and is vital to the successful implementation of this meaningful initiative."

Further, Gardner-Webb faculty will participate in extensive professional



The purpose of the ACE project is to prepare Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP)-Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP), and Clinical Mental Health Counselor (CMHC) students to practice in integrated care sites and improve access to behavioral health services for North Carolina.

development, so that they can better prepare students, colleagues, clinical partners, and other members of the community to meet the unmet needs of marginalized populations, especially those who have or are at-risk of developing co-occurring mental health needs and substance use disorders. This professional development targets the serious unmet needs of children, adolescents, and

transitional-age youth, and will enhance the collective approach to meeting their needs in the region.

The following faculty members collaborated on the grant proposal and will lead implementation of the ACE project: Dr. Tiffany Stewart (PMHNP program coordinator), Dr. Sharon Webb (chair, CMHC program), and Dr. Charlotte Stephens (associate professor of nursing).



Golden LEAF Grant Fuels Health Care Pathways

Gardner-Webb, CCC, and Cleveland County Schools Unite to Expand Health Education

The Golden LEAF Foundation awarded funding through the Community-Based Grants Initiative to Gardner-Webb University and community partners, Cleveland Community College (CCC) and Cleveland County Schools. Totalling over \$1.2 million, the funds will be used to create a health care educational pathway. Leaders from all three entities collaborated to present separate proposals to form a program that addresses regional health care workforce shortages, particularly in nursing and allied health professions.

Gardner-Webb's project focuses on the University's pivotal role in advancing the partnership and supporting regional

health care workforce development. From seventh through 10th grade, the pathway will introduce students to health care career options. Rising 11th and 12th graders will be invited to Gardner-Webb University to participate in a Summer Bridge Program, where they will explore health care fields through lab work, simulations, networking and job shadowing.

Additionally, the students will receive third-party credentialing in CPR and other certifications, better preparing them for further health care education and careers. This support offers students at all stages more opportunities for

education and certification—ultimately boosting employability. The aim is to help high school students, community college graduates, and current or prospective GWU students.

Gardner-Webb received \$290,408.52 for equipment, supplies, and personnel to implement the Summer Bridge Program and enhance nursing training to address Cleveland County's workforce shortage.

As a secondary benefit, the new equipment will support GWU nursing and health sciences students during the academic year. This equipment will enhance the lab experience and provide more efficient/effective training of future

health care providers. This funding also reinforces Gardner-Webb's existing community college transfer agreements.

The awards to Cleveland County were part of \$10.5 million in funding approved by the Golden LEAF Board of Directors to support job creation and economic investment, workforce preparedness, and agriculture projects.

Golden LEAF President, Chief Executive Officer Scott T. Hamilton added, "Through the Community-Based Grants Initiative, Golden LEAF works directly in one prosperity zone annually to identify projects with the greatest potential to have a significant impact. This competitive process focuses on projects that invest in the building blocks of economic growth with the ultimate goal of moving the economic needle in a community. This regional workforce development partnership will help provide a pipeline of skilled health care workers for Cleveland County employers for years to come."



Tune In to the Heart of Gardner-Webb

Discover the **voices shaping** our campus, **classrooms**, and **community**. From **inspiring** alumni **stories** and **academic insights** to **campus life** and Runnin' **Bulldog athletics**—Gardner-Webb's official podcast series brings you closer to the people and passions that define who we are.

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NEWS & NOTES

Founders Day Celebrates Legendary People and Places

Gardner-Webb University celebrated Founders Day on Dec. 5, 2024, by honoring two distinguished contributors with the Founders Medal: Dr. Shirley Putnam Toney and the Royster family.

Toney, dean emerita and professor emerita of nursing, began her GWU journey in 1965 as the first instructor for the Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) program. She later led the program, became the founding dean of the School of Nursing, and helped launch the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) and Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) programs.

The Royster family's three generations of support include Dr. S.S. Royster, whose funding led to the construction of Royster Memorial Hospital, later Royster Hall. His son, David Sr., and grandson, David W. Royster III, continued the legacy, with David III serving on the Board of Trustees and chairing the presidential search committee in 2019.

The ceremony also recognized Bost Gymnasium's namesake, L.C. Bost, the president and founder of Bost Bakeries, whose gift memorialized his daughter Jean. A marker is now in place to recognize this historic location.



GWU Donors Smash Record by Giving Over \$2.8 Million on Double Dawg Day

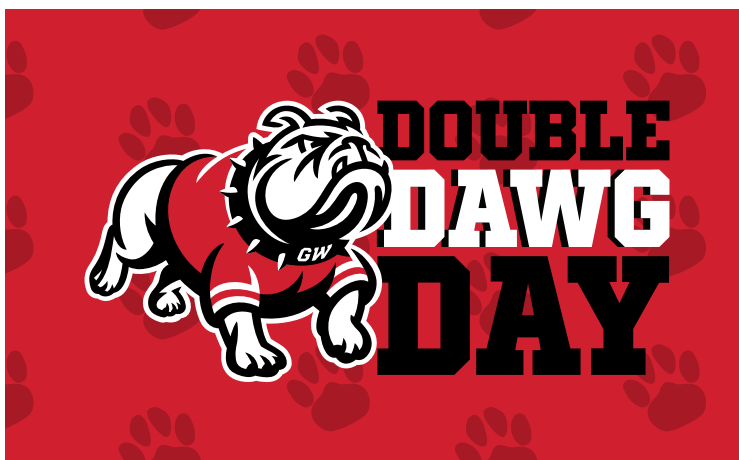
For the 10th consecutive year, enthusiastic supporters of Gardner-Webb University not only surpassed—but more than doubled—the previous year's record. For 24 hours on April 10, Double Dawg Day, 1,354 donors answered the call and raised over \$2.8 million.

Interim GWU President Nate Evans shared his excitement over the monumental response. "It is inspiring to see so many investing in our mission and our students," said Evans. "Thank

you for showing up to celebrate the legacy and the future of GWU in this way."

Donors came from 45 states, with the majority coming from North and South Carolina. On the world map, donations came from Canada, Ireland, Sweden and Poland.

Whether funding scholarships, athletic facilities and training, or enhancing classrooms and labs, each gift has a direct and lasting impact on the success of Gardner-Webb and its students. Numerous challenges and matching opportunities provided additional money throughout the day. These opportunities included two significant bonuses that will be directed toward capital projects across campus.



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APRIL 16, 2026

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GWU Recognized for Commitment to First-Generation Success

Gardner-Webb University is in the 2024-25 FirstGen Forward Network. Powered by FirstGen Forward, this initiative is committed to transforming and advancing the experiences and outcomes of first-generation students. Gardner-Webb received recognition for empowering and fostering growth in these students.

Gardner-Webb University's Director of Success Initiatives and First-Year Experience Kara Alves noted, "This membership allows us to expand programming, resources, and our continued support of these trailblazing students in their pursuit of an education that is for God and humanity."

The FirstGen Forward Network empowers institutions to transform the first-generation experience, encourage academic and co-curricular growth, and develop more inclusive institutional structures. With Gardner-Webb entering the fold, the Network now includes 429 higher education institutions, including two statewide systems, representing 49 states and the District of Columbia.



Will Brooks of Shelby, N.C., Wins Tucker Scholarship

Will Brooks of Shelby, N.C., has been named the 2025 recipient of Gardner-Webb University's prestigious Tucker Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength Scholarship—the first male and first Cleveland County resident to earn the honor. Brooks, a graduate from Pinnacle Classical Academy, ranks among the top 10 in his class and plans to major in finance and economics at GWU.

Selected from 227 applicants and 56 finalists, Brooks is known for his academic excellence, athletic ability and musical talent. He participated in basketball, baseball, and cross country, while also performing vocally and playing multiple instruments. His leadership and perseverance have earned him praise in academics, athletics and service.

He was a member of the National Honor Society and actively supports community efforts, including Relay for Life and crisis ministry fundraising.

Awarded to only one student each year, the Tucker Scholarship covers full tuition, room and board for eight semesters.



High School Senior Kenneth Battle of Rock Hill Wins First Godbold Full-Tuition Scholarship

Kenneth Battle, a senior at South Pointe High School in Rock Hill, S.C., won the first Godbold College of Business Full-Tuition scholarship at Gardner-Webb. "Kenneth exemplified exactly what we want in a student at Gardner-Webb," asserted John Godbold, College of Business namesake. "I'm proud for him to be the first one, and I'm excited about continuing to present a full scholarship in the future."

Battle competed with 38 high school seniors from around the country who interviewed for the award at the first Godbold Scholars Day. The competition was open to business majors with a GPA over 3.5. The event also included campus tours and presentations by Godbold and alumnus Ben Campbell.





Gardner-Webb Graduates Earn Top Scores on Professional Licensure Exams

Gardner-Webb University continues to demonstrate excellence in health care and counseling education, as multiple academic programs posted exceptional licensure exam results for 2024.

The Physician Assistant (PA) Studies program celebrated a 100 percent first-time pass rate on the Physician Assistant

National Certifying Examination (PANCE). This milestone reflects the program's rigorous curriculum, which emphasizes clinical knowledge, reasoning, and skill development through consistent assessments and exam preparation tools.

Similarly, the Hunt School of Nursing announced outstanding performance across

its programs. Graduates of the traditional and accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN and ABSN) achieved a 100 percent pass rate on the NCLEX-RN licensure exam, while the Associate of Science in Nursing (ASN) program earned an impressive 90 percent pass rate. These results underscore the effectiveness of Gardner-Webb's nursing curriculum, which is rooted in evidence-based patient care and designed to meet the evolving demands of the health care field.

In the realm of counseling, Gardner-Webb's Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling and Master of Arts in School Counseling programs also upheld a 100 percent licensure pass rate—an achievement sustained over several years. Additionally, every graduate seeking employment found work in their field, with many hired before completing their degrees.

These successes affirm Gardner-Webb's commitment to preparing graduates who are not only knowledgeable but also ready to lead and serve in high-demand professions.

Gardner-Webb and Foothills Workforce Development Board Sign Partnership Agreement

Gardner-Webb University officials and leaders of the Foothills Workforce Development Board signed a partnership agreement. The Board's mission is to facilitate the delivery of workforce development programs, and to provide scholarships to students who need skills for the workforce within the Foothills Region—McDowell, Rutherford, Cleveland and Polk counties.

The partnership allows Gardner-Webb to provide employee training services through the Searight PACE continuing education program and offer additional scholarship opportunities to Gardner-Webb students who are majoring in health care and other skilled degrees.

The Foothills Workforce Development Board is an initiative of the Foothills Planning and Development Commission, which is the Council of Governments for the Foothills Region in western North Carolina.



Concert Choir One of Four Selected to Perform at N.C. Choral Directors Conference

The North Carolina Chapter of the American Choral Directors Association (NC ACDA) invited the GWU Concert Choir to perform for its October conference at Queens University in Charlotte, N.C. Choirs from across the state auditioned to perform, and the GWU Concert Choir was one of four chosen for the event, which represents the largest annual gathering of choral directors in North Carolina.



The choir, led by Dr. Joshua Cheney, Gardner-Webb assistant professor of music and director of choral activities, presented “Meliora,” a program inspired by the growth and bright future of GWU choirs. They performed selections by renowned American composers like Eric Barnum and modern voices from around the world like Ola Gjeilo.

“Meliora” is a Latin word that means “for the pursuit of the better.” Cheney chose this theme, because the choir consistently seeks to improve individually, in musicianship and community.



New Caf Opened to Campus and Community with Expanded Seating and Menu Options

With the smell of meat smoking and a feast waiting, the Gardner-Webb campus gathered for the ribbon cutting and official reopening and expansion of the Caf in August 2024. A prominent feature on the new addition is a cross to remind everyone that Gardner-Webb is a Christian university that nourishes souls. Inside, there’s another large wooden cross made possible by the support of Dr. and Mrs. Philip E. Turner.

The renovation included a state-of-the-art kitchen for food preparation. Students also now enjoy the addition of outdoor seating, and a common area where they can relax.

Gardner-Webb Alumnus Nathaniel Parks Receives National Composer Award

Gardner-Webb alumnus and adjunct music professor Nathaniel Parks, '17, has been named a 2025 recipient of the ASCAP Foundation Morton Gould Young Composer Award, a national honor recognizing exceptional young talents in concert music. Parks is one of only 16 composers selected through a juried competition.

“As an alumnus and now a faculty member, Professor Parks embodies the spirit of Gardner-Webb,” said Dr. Aaron M. Rice, chair of the Department of Music. “This award is one of the highest honors in his field.”

Parks joins an esteemed group of past winners including Grammy and Pulitzer Prize recipients. “So many musicians I respect won a Morton Gould Award—it feels surreal to be counted among them,” Parks said.

His talent was first recognized as a Gardner-Webb senior, when his choral work was chosen for a national conference of the Society of Composers Inc. “At GWU, the faculty encouraged me to dream bigger,” Parks noted.

Parks earned his master’s from the Peabody Institute and is pursuing a doctorate at the University of Southern California. He resides near Baltimore, Md., and continues composing innovative works that inspire students and fellow musicians alike.



Gardner-Webb Celebrated Nearly 1,000 Graduates in Commencement Ceremonies

Gardner-Webb University celebrated the achievements of nearly 1,000 graduates in ceremonies held on Dec. 13, 2024, and May 8, 2025. The Online Scholastic Award was given to Elizabeth Dahl for the 2024 Fall semester.

Traditional undergraduates, Caitlyn Hamrick and Kyndal Jackson won the Senior Scholastic Award for the 2024 Fall semester. Jackson was also the University's second Tucker Scholar.

In the May 2025 ceremony, nine

traditional undergraduates received the Senior Scholastic Award:

- Crystal L. Aldridge, who was also recognized with the Most Outstanding Graduate medal.
- Theodore Francis Drescher.
- Sydney Grace Hudson.
- Reese Mollie Brynn Jones.
- Abigail Faith McBee.
- Zoe Grace Mina.
- Mylee Kathleen Quattlebaum.
- Ashley Marie Rich.
- Dylin Marie Rose Waldorf.

The Online Scholastic Award winner for the spring ceremony was Abigail Marion Osborne.

Connor Settlemyre also received a Most Outstanding Graduate medal. The Darlene J. Gravett Award was presented to Dr. Yolanda Lindsay for her study on teaching students in foster care.



Bulldogs Bring Baseball, Care to Dominican Republic

"Preaching Jesus through baseball," that's how a member of the Gardner-Webb baseball team summarized the group's trip to the Dominican Republic during the 2024 Fall semester. The 48 players were joined by 10 coaches and other chaperones, including Vice President and University Chaplain for Christian Life and Service Dr. Josh Parrott.

Every major league team has a baseball academy on the island, and 10 percent of the major league players are from the country. The Runnin' Bulldogs experienced the joy of playing baseball with children, as well as the excitement of contending with aspiring MLB players at the Pittsburgh Pirates facility.

They ministered to groups of all ages for five days. Parrot reflected on the trip, "I was impressed with their testimonies at a baseball clinic for the young boys of a local village, and with their prayers for needy and hungry families in a local church."



Gardner-Webb Leads Big South in Academic Honors for Student-Athletes



Gardner-Webb University student-athletes led the Big South Conference in academic excellence for the 2024-25 academic year, with a league-best 85.90 percent, earning a spot on the Presidential Honor Roll. The distinction is awarded to student-athletes who maintain a GPA of 3.0 or higher.

This year marked a record for the Big South, with 81.22 percent of student-athletes across all member institutions meeting the honor roll criteria. Gardner-Webb was one of five universities to surpass 80 percent.

"Our student-athletes continue to achieve record-setting academic accomplishments," said Big South Commissioner Sherika A. Montgomery. "Academics serve as a cornerstone of the student-athlete experience."

Gardner-Webb had 335 of its 390 eligible student-athletes honored. Across the league, 277 received Commissioner's Award distinction for a perfect 4.0 GPA, including many from GWU. This milestone underscores Gardner-Webb's commitment to both academic and athletic excellence.

Gardner-Webb Responds to Needs in Western North Carolina After Hurricane Helene

Just hours after Hurricane Helene tore through western North Carolina in September 2024, Gardner-Webb began collecting donations for the hardest-hit areas. Velvet Sims, a student in the Associate of Science in Nursing program and a licensed pilot with emergency services experience, joined the relief effort immediately.

She and fellow pilots met at Lincoln County Airport to gather supplies for mountain communities. In five days, they flew in 160,000 pounds of aid. Sims described the experience in an email to her instructor, Nicole Beaver, who shared it with others.

Two fall benefit concerts on campus raised donations for First Baptist Church in Asheville and N.C. Baptist on Mission.

Over spring break, two mission teams served in Fletcher, Waynesville, and Swannanoa, helping Samaritan's Purse and N.C. Baptist on Mission rebuild homes.

Amid the devastation, students and team leaders sought to bring hope and healing. They received so much more for their time and effort, gathering blessings and inspiration from people who were grounded in their faith and determined to persevere.



Gardner-Webb Student-Athletes Reese Jones and Theo Drescher Receive Christenberry Award

The Big South Conference announced that a league record-tying 12 student-athletes have been awarded the Conference's prestigious George A. Christenberry Award for Academic Excellence. The award is given to a graduating male and female student-athlete who attain the highest GPA during their undergraduate collegiate careers.

For the 13th consecutive year, at least six student-athletes have been honored, and this year's honorees match the record number of recipients first achieved in 2019-20.

Receiving the honor from Gardner-Webb are women's lacrosse player Reese Jones (4.00 in biology/biomedical science) and men's swimmer Theodore "Theo" Drescher (4.00 in graphic design). Both students were also recognized with Senior Scholastic Awards at the commencement ceremony on May 8, 2025.

Big South member institutions nominate one male and one female student-athlete for the annual Christenberry Award, or multiple student-athletes that tie for the highest GPA on their respective campus.



Former Gardner-Webb Standout Mario Williams Inducted into Big South Hall of Fame

Former Gardner-Webb football standout Mario Williams was officially inducted into the Big South Conference Hall of Fame, honoring a record-setting career that helped elevate the program nationally in the early 2000s and inspired future generations of Runnin' Bulldogs.

A converted prep quarterback, Williams became one of the most dynamic and feared safeties in league history. He earned back-to-back Big South Defensive Player of the Year honors in 2002 and 2003, earning Division I-AA All-America recognition both seasons. Williams finished his collegiate career with 326 tackles and 35 pass breakups—both program records for a defensive back. He was honored three consecutive years with Big South accolades.

Williams later enjoyed a professional career with NFL Europe's Frankfurt Galaxy.

His induction highlights Gardner-Webb's tradition of excellence and solidifies his legacy as one of the most impactful players to take the field at Ernest W. Spangler Stadium.

Rev. Dr. M. Lamont Littlejohn Jr. is First African American Chair of Gardner-Webb Board of Trustees

The Rev. Dr. M. Lamont Littlejohn Jr. is the first African American chair of Gardner-Webb University's Board of Trustees. A three-time GWU alumnus, Littlejohn is pastor of Mt. Calvary Baptist Church in Shelby, N.C. In 2019, he became the first African American chair of the Cleveland Community College Board of Trustees.

As Gardner-Webb board of trustees' chair and chair of the Presidential

Search Committee, Littlejohn's goals are transparency, accountability and communication. He wants to foster unity among board members and keep them informed about campus, community and University life.

Another priority is to make Gardner-Webb a place where faculty and staff are eager to get to work every day. "It's about community, building those relationships, and showing our students, our faculty, and our staff their value and their meaning," Littlejohn asserted. "We want God to be glorified in the Springs."



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UNIVERSITY

Gardner-Webb Affirmed by Southern Association of Colleges and Schools; Music Department Receives Additional Accreditation

Gardner-Webb University has received full compliance status from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) following its Fifth Year Interim Report. This reaffirmation confirms that all university operations—including academics, governance, facilities and student services—meet the commission’s rigorous standards. Gardner-Webb is accredited to confer associate, bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees, along with certificates and diplomas at approved levels.

The Fifth Year Interim Report is a standard requirement for all SACSCOC-accredited institutions. Gardner-Webb’s next comprehensive review is scheduled for 2027, and campus teams are actively gathering input and preparing the next Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP).

Additionally, the University’s Department of Music earned renewed accreditation from the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM), further affirming the strength of its Bachelor of Arts in Music and Bachelor of Music programs.



GWU Student Film Wins Founder’s Choice Award at Real to Reel Festival

A documentary created by Gardner-Webb University students, “Shaping the Old North State,” was honored with the Founder’s Choice Award at the 26th Annual Real to Reel International Film Festival. The recognition came during the closing awards ceremony held July 26 at the Joy Performance Center in Kings Mountain, N.C. The Cleveland County Arts Council organizes the festival, which celebrates the art of independent filmmaking.

Co-founder Noel T. Manning II said, “The Founder’s Choice Award was created to honor films that reflect the spirit of celebrating a time, place, or people whose stories deserve to be remembered. This year’s honoree is especially meaningful. ‘Shaping the Old North State’ captures the extraordinary



legacies of O. Max Gardner and Fay Webb-Gardner.”

GWU graduate Carson Willoughby served as director, cinematographer and editor for the film, supported by students Dakota Hawxwell and Jonathan Holbrook. The project was produced through a documentary class led by faculty members Jessica Maloney and Dr. Chris Nelson.

“It’s amazing to see our student filmmakers win the Founder’s Choice Award,” said Maloney. “Their achievement reflects the creativity, innovation, and collaborative spirit we strive to foster.”

This is the second consecutive year that a Gardner-Webb student film has been featured at the festival, which received more than 200 submissions from filmmakers representing 26 countries and six continents.

Gardner-Webb Faculty Honored for Excellence, Service and Scholarship

Members of the Gardner-Webb University faculty were honored with various awards to recognize service, mentoring, excellence in teaching and emerging leadership for the 2024-25 academic year. Interim President Nate Evans selected the winner of the Early Career Award. Recipients of the other awards are nominated by their peers and selected by the Faculty Development of Instruction and Improvement Committee (FDIIC).



Dr. Ivelina "Iva" Naydenova received the Excellence in Teaching Award. Chair and professor in the Department of Psychological Science, Naydenova started her career at Gardner-Webb nearly 15 years ago and has grown to be a tenured professor. She has thrived at GWU to

become an accomplished teacher, mentor and scholar. She was recognized for her academic rigor, effective course design and dedication to students.



Dr. Heather Wright was recognized with the Gardner-Webb president's Early Career Award in recognition of her exceptional performance as an assistant professor. Wright has worked full time at GWU for three years and served as an adjunct instructor for six years. She was recognized

for her productivity in scholarship, creative discovery and instruction that exceeds expectations. The honor also acknowledges her outstanding performance in professional development and excellence in service.



Dr. Lorell Gordon received the Faculty Service Award. An assistant professor in the School of Psychological Science and Counselor Education, Gordon has been an asset to growth in her department. Valued by her colleagues and students, she is recognized for her hard work and innovative thinking in working across credit and non-

credit domains for the betterment of Gardner-Webb. She was instrumental in the development and implementation of a new concentration in her department and chaired several search committees for eligible new hires on both the main campus and Charlotte campus. She has volunteered her time securing approval for continuing education credits for mental health counselors to obtain through the Searight PACE program.



Dr. Sarah Fabian was chosen for the Rising Star Award. The director of bands and assistant professor of music, Fabian was nominated for her standards of excellence. She inspires and helps her students to achieve their goals. Fabian is constantly interacting with potential students to provide opportunities for them to experience life at Gardner-Webb. She has made her mark on campus life by setting the tone for all football and basketball games, and elevating the game day experience with new and inventive ideas.



Dr. Steven Harmon, professor of historical theology, was presented the Scholarship Faculty Award.

This award includes excellence in research and/or scholarly contribution to a field by a full-time faculty member. Harmon has served the University as a full-time faculty member since 2015. He has amassed a wide variety of scholarly research over the last year that has been published and presented. One nominator wrote, "Harmon's scholarship of record is one that any faculty member at any university in the world would be proud of. He is one of the leading Baptist theologians alive and working today, and his name and work are recognized throughout the Baptist academic and ecclesial world."



Lisa Brummett was honored with the Mentoring and Academic Advising Award. An instructor of health sport and physical education, Brummett has shown excellence in mentoring, advising, out-of-class support, encouragement, and collaboration on student research projects by a full-time faculty

member. She knows every single class her students have taken, when her students are in student teaching, when students will complete the edTPA, and when students need to take their state required tests. Her graduates have all passed their edTPA with strong scores and have successfully found teaching positions.



Gardner-Webb Director of Bands Sarah Fabian Named 2025 Yamaha ‘40 Under 40’

Dr. Sarah Fabian, director of bands and assistant professor of music at Gardner-Webb University, has been named to Yamaha’s prestigious 2025 “40 Under 40” list. Chosen from hundreds of nominations, she was recognized as an outstanding young music educator making a national impact by advancing the University’s band programs.

Since joining Gardner-Webb in 2022, Fabian has led a strategic overhaul of recruitment—visiting high schools, attending music festivals, and engaging directly with music educators and prospective students. Her efforts have driven

significant growth in the number of music majors and participants in the marching band, pep band and symphonic band.

Yamaha highlighted honorees who demonstrate action, courage, creativity and growth in their work. Fabian was recognized for her multifaceted approach to music education and for creating a dynamic culture of excellence and enthusiasm in GWU’s ensembles.

Her story and contributions are featured on Yamaha’s website as part of the national award announcement.



William Glover, Native of Shelby, N.C., Leads Bulldog Club

William Glover recently graduated from Gardner-Webb with his Master of Science in sport management. He has a Bachelor of Science in sport management and a minor in business administration from North Carolina State University.

While pursuing his master’s, Glover was a graduate assistant and intern for the GWU men’s basketball team. He provided administrative and academic support to faculty and team members, assisted with course materials and program management, coordinated team activities and

supported athletic operations. He also organized team meals for all home games, away games and team events.

Glover developed strong relationships with the players and coaches as he supported various athletic department initiatives. In his new position, he will play a crucial role in supporting Gardner-Webb’s student-athletes who compete in 22 NCAA Division I sports. Glover’s key responsibilities include the management of the Bulldog Club Membership program and the development of strategic sponsorship programs.



Shannon Hovis is New Director of Alumni and Parent Relations

Gardner-Webb University proudly welcomes alumna Shannon Hovis, ’95, as the new leader of alumni and parent engagement. With a heart for service and deep ties to the University, Hovis returns to her alma mater bringing more than 25 years of experience in relationship-building, leadership and community outreach.

A graduate with a degree in business administration and a minor in marketing, Hovis spent two decades in leadership roles at the Cleveland County YMCA before transitioning to financial services. She has previously served as

executive director of the Ruby C. Hunt YMCA in Boiling Springs, N.C., and worked with clients at Gragg Financial.

In her new role, Hovis will connect alumni and parents through events such as Homecoming, regional gatherings and networking opportunities. She will also support philanthropic efforts and expand communication through newsletters and social media—ensuring the Gardner-Webb family stays connected, informed and inspired.



Dr. Gregory D. Pillar Named Assistant Provost for Academic Affairs

Dr. Gregory D. Pillar brings more than 16 years of experience in higher education as both an administrator and professor. Most recently, he served as associate provost for Academic Affairs at Queens University of Charlotte, N.C., and previously as assistant provost for University Programs from 2017-21.

At Queens, he led initiatives in academic operations, faculty affairs, and curriculum development, significantly advancing institutional goals and student outcomes. As the university's Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC)

liaison, he oversaw accreditation efforts, including a successful decennial reaffirmation with no follow-up recommendations.

A committed scholar, Pillar frequently presents at academic conferences, and his work has appeared in peer-reviewed publications. He holds a Ph.D. in agronomy (environmental chemistry) from the University of Georgia, a Master of Science in agronomy (soil science) from Kansas State University, and a Bachelor of Science in environmental science (soil science and hydrology) from the University of Minnesota.



Dr. Olga Poliakova Earns First Student Advocate of the Year Award

The Gardner-Webb University Division of Student Success awarded its first Student Advocate of the Year award to professor of Mathematics, Dr. Olga Poliakova. Given annually, this award will recognize the contributions of faculty and staff toward helping to support students. The recipient personifies the mission of student success, which is to provide resources and support to educate, equip, and empower all students to succeed academically and personally in their unique college journeys.

Poliakova became part of the Gardner-Webb faculty in 2000, after earning her Ph.D. in mathematics from the University of Arkansas,

Fayetteville. She also received her Master of Science in applied mathematics from Moscow State University, Russia. She teaches courses in calculus, linear algebra, modern abstract algebra, finite mathematics, and research in mathematics.

Poliakova was praised for her dedication to creating a supportive, empowering learning environment by Dr. Robert Prickett, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Prickett emphasized her impact both in and beyond the classroom, noting that her recognition as Student Advocate of the Year reflects her meaningful and highly valued work with students.



Thomas Welch Joins GWU as Vice President of Finance and Administration

Thomas Welch, a certified public accountant, has 20 years of financial management experience, which includes 15 years working in higher education and five years in state government offices. He came to GWU from Husson University in Bangor, Maine, where he also served as vice president for finance and administration, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and treasurer.

At Husson, Welch managed multiple offices and realigned the budget schedule to better match financial aid and enrollment timelines. He led the

design of an integrated dashboard for academic programs and introduced new grant management forms to improve fiscal compliance.

Welch earned his MBA from Southern Wesleyan University in Central, S.C., in 2009 and his bachelor's in accounting from Francis Marion University in Florence, S.C., in 2005.

In addition to experience in higher education, Welch served five years in South Carolina's central government audit services. He was a senior audit manager in the governor's office and worked in the state auditor's office.



Terri Williams Named New Women's Basketball Head Coach

Terri Williams, a 30-year coaching veteran with 17 seasons as a Division I head coach, joins Gardner-Webb as the new women's basketball head coach, after serving as associate head coach at Penn State during the 2024-25 campaign. Prior to her promotion, she spent two seasons as an assistant with the Nittany Lions.

Williams previously led programs at Georgetown University and Auburn University, where she earned a combined 283 career wins. At Georgetown, she guided the team to three straight NCAA Tournament appearances,

including a historic Sweet 16 run in 2010-11. She also had postseason success with Auburn and Georgetown in the Women's National Invitation Tournament (WNIT).

Renowned for her defensive-minded teams, Williams helped set school records at Auburn and built one of the Big Ten's top defenses at Penn State. In 2023-24, the Nittany Lions forced the third most turnovers in the league and earned their most wins since 2016-17.

A native of Hampton, Va., Williams played four seasons for Penn State, appearing in 111 games.



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IN MEMORIAM

Dr. Doris Banner, Longtime Gardner-Webb Educator and Advocate, Dies at 88

Dr. Doris Banner, a devoted educator who served Gardner-Webb University for more than three decades, passed away March 19, 2025, in Rising Star, Texas. She was 88.

Banner, an alumna of then-Gardner-Webb Junior College in the 1950s, returned in 1970 as an assistant professor of mathematics and physics. She was the founding editor and research director for the inaugural GWU Faculty Emeriti publication. The project became a landmark achievement, with students, faculty, staff and university friends contributing to the first edition released in 1994. The second edition is dedicated to her memory. This publication continues today because of the foundational efforts Banner put into place.

In 2003, she was named to Gardner-Webb's Gallery of Distinguished Alumni.

A native of Webster, N.C., Banner earned her teaching degree, master's and education specialist degrees from Appalachian State University and completed her doctorate through UNC-Greensboro.

Her 40-year academic career included teaching high school science and mathematics in North Carolina and Florida, working with adult learners at Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College and serving as an instructional specialist for the N.C. Department of Public Instruction. Even after retirement, she remained active in curriculum development and research focused on teaching methods and evaluation.

Her work continues to shape the legacy of academic excellence at Gardner-Webb.



A Champion for Community and Classroom: Remembering Ron Beane

Gardner-Webb University celebrates the life of Ron Beane, former trustee, educator and servant-leader. A 1957 graduate, Beane was a standout student-athlete and associate editor of the student newspaper. His early leadership at Gardner-Webb paved the way for decades of public service and advocacy.

Beane's dedication to Gardner-Webb continued long after graduation. He supported student-athletes through the Bulldog Club, engaged with the Christian Service Organization and served on the Board of Trustees. His passion for education led to a distinguished career in Caldwell County Schools, where he retired as associate superintendent.

After retirement, Beane served 12 years as a Caldwell County

Commissioner, championing education and conservation. He played a key role in securing the Wild and Scenic River designation for Wilson Creek and served on the board of the Foothills Conservancy of North Carolina. He also co-authored "Fly Fishermen of Caldwell County."

A faithful member of Mountain Grove Baptist Church, Beane was a Sunday school teacher and deacon chair. He received the N.C. Baptist Heritage Award, the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, and was inducted into the Caldwell County Sports Hall of Fame.

His legacy of service and leadership reminds all of the profound impact one person can have on their community and the world.



From Field to Family: Remembering Will Corn's Lasting Impact

The Gardner-Webb University community grieved the unexpected loss of longtime staff member Will Corn, who passed away on June 14, 2025, at age 46. A native of Lattimore, N.C., Corn served for more than a decade as the athletics facilities coordinator, becoming a fixture in campus life and a trusted friend to many.

"Will never met a stranger. He truly lived out Jesus's commandment to love your neighbor," said Chuck Burch, interim vice president for athletics. "His life epitomized the servant leadership ideal."

Corn's influence reached far beyond his job. Whether maintaining fields, supporting coaches, or offering a kind word, he embodied joy, humility, and

unwavering commitment to others. His smile and steady presence were a daily comfort to many.

"Whether you knew Will for a week or for years, you experienced his energy, joy and the genuine care he brought to every interaction," shared Nate Evans, interim president. "He poured his heart and soul into Gardner-Webb University."

His deep community involvement included work with the Boiling Springs Rotary Club, Mount Harmony Church, and First Baptist Church of Shelby.

"Will lived a life of deep friendship, love, compassion and true acceptance of everyone," a friend said. "One of a kind."





Rooted in Faith, Resounding in Song: Remembering David Roach

Gardner-Webb University alumnus David Roach, 62, of Rutherfordton, N.C., died April 26, 2025.

Born April 11, 1963, Roach was a lifelong resident of Rutherford County. His passion for music began at age 5 when he received his first piano for Christmas—a gift that would shape the course of his life and ministry.

A gifted musician and man of faith, Roach shared his talents in theaters, concert halls, churches, rest homes, weddings and funerals across the country and overseas. He was a founding member of the gospel group “In His Glory,” using his music not for personal acclaim but to uplift others and glorify God. Known for his humility and heart, he mentored and inspired countless young musicians throughout his life. Roach was also a piano teacher, and hundreds of his students continue to carry on his love of music.

Roach had a tradition of offering standing room only Christmas concerts throughout the years that served to astound and inspire audiences.

David Roach’s legacy lives on in every life he touched through his music and ministry.



Joe DePriest, '66, Remembered for Storytelling Legacy and Lifelong Curiosity

Joseph DePriest Jr., a 1966 Gardner-Webb University graduate and award-winning journalist, died April 30, 2025, at age 81. Known for his storytelling talent and boundless curiosity, DePriest spent 45 years in journalism, first at The Shelby Star and later The Charlotte Observer.

A Shelby, N.C., native, DePriest began his reporting journey as a printer’s apprentice. After earning his degree from Gardner-Webb and studying journalism at UNC-Chapel Hill, he launched a career chronicling the lives of everyday people with warmth and insight. He was inducted into Gardner-Webb’s Gallery of Distinguished Alumni in 2016.

DePriest’s career included service in Vietnam as a military journalist. He returned to Shelby, where he became known for his unique ability to elevate the voices of others—whether local gardeners, veterans or city officials. In 1990, he joined The Observer, covering Gaston and surrounding counties with the same empathetic lens.

A published author, he cowrote “Tales and Tombstones of Sunset Cemetery,” and explored Southern memory and culture through historical narratives in his debut book, “Voices in Time: Stories of The Banker’s House.”

He was widely admired for his humility, wit and love of literature. A self-described “collector of people,” DePriest’s enduring impact rests in the many stories he told—and the countless lives he touched.

Legacy of Leadership and Faith: Remembering Dr. William Eubanks

Former Gardner-Webb University trustee Dr. William Malcolm Eubanks Jr. passed away on Dec. 26, 2024, in Augusta, Ga. He served on the University's Board of Trustees from 2005 to 2013.

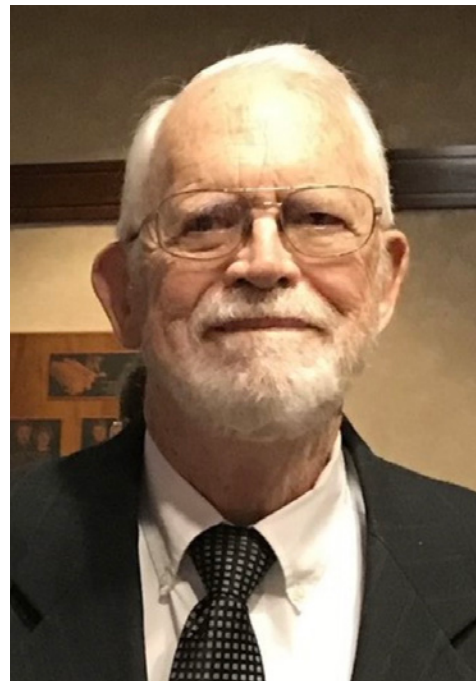
A graduate of the University of Georgia in 1950 and the Medical College of Georgia in 1954, Eubanks completed his internship and residency at Georgia Baptist Hospital. He served as a captain in the U.S. Army Medical Corps from 1955 to 1957.

Eubanks began his OB-GYN practice in 1960 in Charlotte, N.C., delivering over 7,000 babies during his 38-year career.

A man of deep faith, he served in many roles at Commonwealth Baptist Church in Charlotte, including chairman

of the board of deacons and finance chairman. After moving to Troutman, N.C., he and his wife, Angadell "Angie" Adams Eubanks, became active members of First Baptist Church, Statesville, N.C., where they served as long as their health allowed.

In addition to Gardner-Webb, Eubanks was a member of several prestigious organizations, including serving as treasurer of the Allison Woods Outdoor Learning Center Board, and various Masonic, medical, and community organizations. He enjoyed hobbies such as automobile repair and restoration, gardening, fishing and crabbing with his grandchildren, and vacationing with family at Hunting Island State Park in South Carolina.



Dr. Terry Fern: A Voice of Inspiration for Generations

Dr. Terry Fern, professor emeritus of fine arts at Gardner-Webb University, passed away Sept. 14, 2024. He retired in 2010 after a 30-year career marked by passion, mentorship and unwavering faith.

Fern taught voice, musical theatre and fine arts, and served as director of the GWU Opera Theatre. He founded "Student Day at the Opera," which brought nearly 30,000 students to campus over 25 years. His commitment to making opera accessible sparked a lifelong appreciation for the arts among young people who may never have encountered it otherwise.

A U.S. Marine Corps veteran who served in Vietnam, Fern earned his

Master of Music from the University of Louisville and a Doctor of Musical Arts from the University of North Texas. He led worship at several churches across the Carolinas and was a devoted member of Elizabeth Baptist Church in Shelby, N.C., for 38 years.

Fern lived by the motto, "nothing ventured, nothing gained," and encouraged students to explore their "imagination quotient." His infectious enthusiasm, creativity and faith touched thousands of lives. Whether in the classroom, the sanctuary or on the stage, Fern inspired generations to pursue excellence with courage, purpose and heart. His influence echoes in every note sung, every lesson taught.



Living Faith Through Courage: Evelyn Krause Moss

From the quiet foothills of Union Mills, N.C., to the mission fields of Africa, Evelyn Krause Moss, '48, exemplified a life of faith, service and resilience. A valedictorian at just 16, Moss arrived at Gardner-Webb University with a clear vision: to serve Christ wholeheartedly. It was here that she joined Boiling Springs Baptist Church and met Zeb Moss, beginning a love story and ministry partnership that spanned continents and seven decades.

Moss' journey—from teaching elementary school to becoming one of the first Baptist missionaries to Northern Rhodesia—was marked by boundless compassion and a fearless spirit. Fluent in multiple languages and deeply immersed

in local cultures, she taught, mentored, and ministered across Zambia, Malawi, Kenya and Zimbabwe. Even after losing her hearing and facing arrest while witnessing in Harare, her unwavering faith led to the conversion of one of her captors.

She returned to the U.S. after 39 years abroad, continuing to lead mission efforts and women's ministries into her 80s. Moss passed away on Feb. 3, 2025, leaving behind a global legacy of grace, strength and the Gospel.

Her life remains a shining testament to Gardner-Webb's mission to inspire transformative impact through Christian leadership.



Advocate, Educator and Visionary Servant GWU Remembers Trustee Emeritus Dr. C. Lorance "Rance" Henderson

Gardner-Webb celebrates his enduring impact on education, service, leadership, accessibility, and community inclusion.

Gardner-Webb University is honoring the legacy of Dr. C. Lorance "Rance" Henderson, trustee emeritus and passionate supporter of Christian higher education, who passed away July 21, 2025, at age 92.

Henderson's involvement with Gardner-Webb began in 1977 and continued for nearly five decades. He was awarded an honorary Doctor of Humane Letters in 1979 and joined the Board of Trustees the following year, serving multiple terms until being named trustee emeritus in 2021. His philanthropic efforts included establishing endowed

scholarships and championing the Noel Center for Disability Resources, which provides transformative support for students with disabilities.

A pioneer in deaf education, Henderson held leadership roles at the Oregon State School for the Deaf and the North Carolina Schools for the Deaf. His efforts elevated national standards in education for students with hearing impairments, leaving a lasting impact on countless lives.

Born in Kings Mountain, N.C., Henderson was a U.S. Navy veteran and a dedicated civic leader.

He contributed to organizations such as the Boy Scouts of America and the N.C. Partnership for Children. His many honors from Gardner-Webb include the



Distinguished Service Award (2012) and the North Carolina Baptist Heritage Award (2018), jointly received with his wife, Betty. In 2008, he also received the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, one of North Carolina's highest civilian honors.

Campus Minister, Mentor, Friend: Rev. Buddy Freeman's Enduring Impact

Gardner-Webb University honors the life and legacy of the Rev. Charles W. "Buddy" Freeman, a 1962 graduate whose ministry and leadership spanned decades of service in Christian higher education.

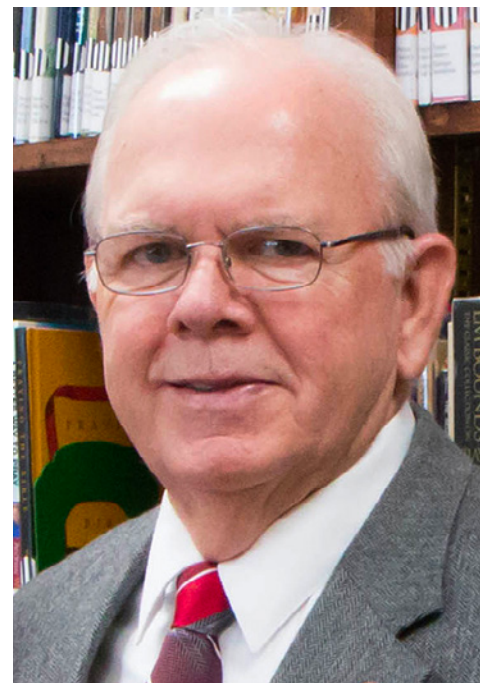
Freeman returned to Gardner-Webb in 1968 to serve as the University's first official campus minister, a role he held until 1980. He co-founded the Christian Service Organization, which continues to support students preparing for ministry. He later served as dean of Admissions and Financial Planning and became the founding director of Church Relations in 1987, forging vital connections between the University and faith communities across the region.

Freeman was widely known for his wit, storytelling and commitment

to ministry. He was recognized with the Gardner-Webb Service Award and the Outstanding Alumnus Award. His impact extended beyond Boiling Springs, N.C., including distinguished service at North Greenville University, where he led admissions and helped launch a scholarship fund that grew to more than \$5 million and supported countless students.

In 2007, Freeman received an honorary doctorate, and in 2017, he donated a personal collection of more than 1,000 books on prayer to North Greenville.

His unwavering dedication to Christian higher education and ministry serves as a model of Christian leadership, and his lasting contributions will be remembered with deep gratitude.



Dr. Zeb Moss, '50, Honored for Lifelong Global Ministry

Dr. Zebedee Vance Moss, a 1950 Gardner-Webb University alumnus and member of the 2007 Gallery of Distinguished Alumni, died Oct. 19, 2024, at age 94. A pioneering Southern Baptist missionary, he devoted more than six decades to ministry across Africa and the United States.

Born in Ashley Heights, N.C., Moss answered the call to ministry while still in high school. At Gardner-Webb, he met his wife, Evelyn, beginning a 72-year marriage and ministry partnership. He earned degrees from Wake Forest University, UNC-Chapel Hill and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, with studies in Greek, English, Hebrew and communications.

In 1959, Zeb and Evelyn were appointed by the Southern Baptist

Foreign Mission Board as the first missionaries to Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia). Their work laid the foundation for thousands of churches, a seminary and a global Bible correspondence program. He later served as a media consultant for 31 African nations, authored "Missions Alive" and supported humanitarian outreach in Somalia with Samaritan's Purse.

After retiring in 1997, he continued leading mission trips, pastoring churches and serving as a hospital chaplain into his 80s. Moss' life was a testament to unwavering faith, visionary leadership and a global passion for sharing the Gospel.

Memorial gifts support the Zeb and Evelyn Moss Seminary Scholarship at Aberdeen First Baptist Church.



From Choir Loft to Mountaintop: Celebrating Dr. Phil Perrin's Life

Dr. Phil Perrin, professor emeritus of music at Gardner-Webb University, died May 14, 2025. He was known for his deep faith, passion for teaching and extraordinary commitment to music ministry and missions.

Perrin taught at Gardner-Webb for 34 years, joining the faculty in 1969. He led choirs, taught music history, worship, hymnology and more. He later directed the University's handbell choir and, in his final two years, taught in the School of Divinity's Master of Church Music program.

A Tennessee native, Perrin held degrees from the University of Tennessee and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He also served as minister of music in numerous churches

across North and South Carolina, shaping congregational worship and mentoring young musicians.

Beyond the classroom, Perrin blended ministry with adventure. An avid mountaineer, he hiked the Appalachian Trail and climbed the highest peaks on six continents. During these journeys, he took part in short-term mission assignments across more than a dozen countries.

In 2003, he and his wife, Wilda, moved to Tanzania for a two-year mission. They later taught in China, enduring hardships with resilience and faith.

Perrin's legacy is one of service, scholarship and global impact—his music and mission continues to inspire generations across continents.



From the Court to the Classroom: Tom Watson's Lasting Impact

Tom Watson, a 1963 graduate of Gardner-Webb University and lifelong champion of education and athletics, passed away Aug. 22, 2024, at age 81. A former student-athlete, Watson helped lead the Runnin' Bulldogs to their first basketball championship during the 1962-63 season. He earned his associate degree in 1963 and remained closely tied to Gardner-Webb throughout his life.

Watson served on the University's Board of Trustees and the Alumni Association Board, and he was a lifetime member of the Bulldog Club. His unwavering support earned him several of the institution's highest honors, including the Distinguished Alumni Award in 2009, Alumnus of the Year in 2010, and the Meritorious Service Award in 2012.

Watson was a familiar face at campus events, known for his warm smile, generous spirit and thoughtful mentorship. His family's scholarship continues to support student-athletes and the Bulldog Club, reflecting a legacy rooted in giving and service.

A native of Great Falls, S.C., Watson later earned his master's and education specialist degrees from Appalachian State University. He served in education for decades as a teacher, coach and administrator. His nearly 25 years as a high school conference secretary and his 2017 induction into the Catawba Valley Sports Hall of Fame underscored his lifelong impact on students and sports communities alike.



Codi Slayton, '19, Remembered for His Unshakable Faith and Global Heart

Codi Slayton, a 2019 graduate of Gardner-Webb University and an early recipient of the Top Dawg Award, died March 23, 2025, after a brief battle with brain cancer. He was 28.

Known for his compassionate spirit and bold witness, Slayton became a recognizable face of GWU, featured in marketing campaigns across the Carolinas. But it was his work beyond campus that defined his legacy.

Slayton served with Samaritan's Purse, delivering gift-filled Operation Christmas Child shoeboxes worldwide. He also dedicated 10 summers to mission work in Honduras with Louder Than Words Missions, leading teams deep into the mountains. His dream was to establish an orphanage

there—a testament to his lifelong commitment to serve others.

When not on mission, he cherished spending quality time with family and friends. A keen board game strategist and film enthusiast, Slayton often hosted movie nights that became cherished gatherings. His personality was marked by generosity, humor and a powerful sense of purpose. His friends remember his signature blend of joy, humility and steadfastness.

Those who knew him praised his integrity, attention to detail and unwavering faith. Slayton embodied Philippians 2:3-4, always putting others before himself. His life was a model of Christlike love and servant leadership that continues to inspire.



A Lasting Legacy in Every Note: Remembering Dr. George R. Cribb

Dr. George R. Cribb, professor emeritus of music at Gardner-Webb University, died Dec. 17, 2024, in Greenville, S.C. He was 97.

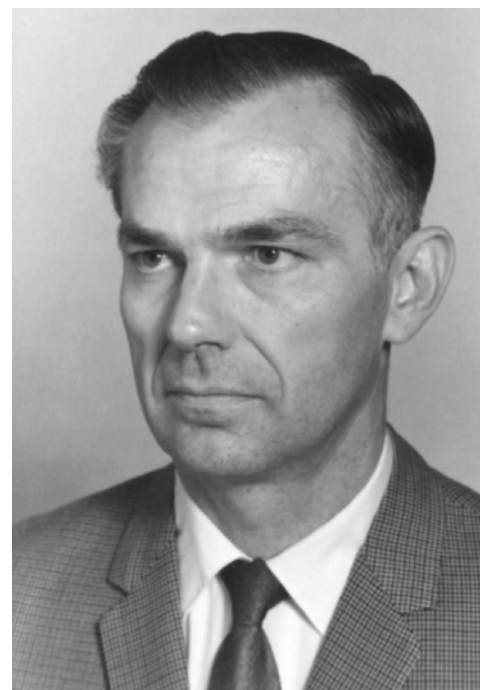
Cribb joined Gardner-Webb in 1969 as chair of the Department of Fine Arts, the same year the University launched its music major as part of its transition to a four-year institution. He was instrumental in securing accreditation from the National Association of Schools of Music, which the department has maintained ever since.

Known for his expertise in piano and music theory, Cribb also directed the University's choral ensemble and served as a mentor to countless students. He

retired in 1992 but remained a respected figure in the music community. In addition to his academic work, he spent more than 40 years as a church choir director, including 21 years at Shelby Presbyterian Church. He was admired for his calm leadership, musical precision and deep investment in student growth.

Cribb earned degrees from Wake Forest University, Columbia University and University of North Texas. He was preceded in death by his wife, Barbara Jensen Cribb, also a professor emerita at Gardner-Webb.

His legacy lives on in the music and memories he cultivated across decades of devoted service.



Look forward to seeing you back on campus soon!



Contact: Shannon Hovis,
Director of Alumni and Parent Relations,
shovis@gardner-webb.edu, 704-406-2251

[Gardner-webb.edu/alumni](https://gardner-webb.edu/alumni)



Great Leaders For God and Humanity

At Gardner-Webb University, we market ourselves on regional billboards as “the Carolina’s leader in Christian higher education.” Our University’s mission is to “prepare graduates for leadership and service in their professional careers and in their personal lives.” On campus, we are discipling and preparing students for service “For God and Humanity.” Our faculty, staff and coaches are leaders in their respective fields, areas of expertise and professional societies.

Leadership development and leadership training best occurs as we collectively fix our eyes on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-2). We have our hearts and minds daily oriented to Him as we walk from building to building on campus. At each entrance you find these words from Jesus, “The first of all commandments is: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. And the second is: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”(Mark 12:29- 31)

In the Bible we find that there are certain consistent qualities that all great leaders possess:

First, great leaders recognize the authority and supremacy of the Lord God, and they obey His commandments. They love and treasure Him above all else, they love their neighbors, and they respect the “Imago Dei” in each person.

Second, great leaders are followers of King Jesus, our supreme example of authenticity, humility, selflessness and integrity. They

serve and obey Jesus; they respect His authority and depend on the power of the Holy Spirit while seeking the will of the Father. Furthermore, they value time alone with God the Father in prayer and reading Scripture.

Third, great leaders expand God’s Kingdom (Matthew 6:10) in their families, their workplaces and their neighborhoods. They build trust and build teams of future leaders who are mobilized for action.

Gardner-Webb consistently produces great leaders for the glory of God, for the furthering of His Kingdom, and for the betterment of humanity. Would you join me today in praying for our campus leaders (faculty, staff, and alumni)? Would you also join me in praying that the Lord of the harvest would raise up more laborers and leaders on our campus, in our communities, and in our world? (Luke 10:2)

The prophet Hanani once ... declared, “certainly ... the Lord watches the whole earth carefully and is ready to strengthen those who are devoted to Him” (2 Chronicles 16:9). May God find us devoted and obedient, and may He strengthen us as we submit to King Jesus, seek to follow His example of servant-leadership, and expand His Kingdom by the power of the Holy Spirit!

Dr. Josh Parrott

*Vice President for Christian Life
and Service and University Chaplain*





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YOUR MEMBERSHIP, THEIR FUTURE, **OUR MISSION**



Now is the time to join the Bulldog Club! The Club empowers more than 500 Runnin' Bulldog student-athletes to be champions both on and off the field at Gardner-Webb University.

Scholarships begin with your support of the Bulldog Club. Join us as we continue to build the Runnin' Bulldog **CommUNITY!**

For more information on the **BULLDOG CLUB** visit gardner-webb.edu/bulldog-club



Be sure to follow the Bulldog Club on social media to keep up with the Runnin' Bulldogs! ►
Contact: William Glover, Director of Bulldog Club and Sponsorships, wglover@gardner-webb.edu, 704-406-4630