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Gardner-Webb Associate Provost Returns to the Stage for Powerful Performance

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Office of University Communications

September 11, 2012

Theatre Department Presents “Tuesdays with Morrie” Starring Dr. Earl Leininger

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – When the Gardner-Webb School of Performing and Visual Arts Theatre Department opens its fall season with “Tuesdays with Morrie,” it will bring back an actor, Dr. Earl Leininger, and director, Jim Thomas, who have worked on this production together in the past. Performances take place in the Millennium Theatre, located in the Communications Studies Hall, Sept. 14-15 at 7:30 p.m. and Sept. 16 during a 2:30 p.m. matinee.

“Tuesdays with Morrie” is written by Jeffrey Hatcher and Mitch Albom and was based on the bestselling autobiography by Albom. The play, featuring only two characters, tells the story of a career-absorbed journalist who visits his retired college professor and discovers the basic truths of living, dying, and what it means to love.

Leininger, who serves as associate provost for Arts and Sciences at Gardner-Webb, stars in the role of Morrie just as he did in the summer of 2010 when the Southern Appalachian Repertory Theatre at Mars Hill College (N.C.) presented the play. The production is directed by Leininger’s longtime professional associate and personal friend, Thomas (who directed the 2010 version). Today, Thomas serves as dean for the GWU School of Performing and Visual Arts.

“After finishing as a theatre major in college, I first met Jim (Thomas) in 1968 when I began working at Mars Hill,” said Leininger. “A couple of years later he talked me into joining a student production. I was even in ‘The Fantastics’, the debut show for the Southern App Repertory Theatre, which Jim helped start in 1975.” From there Leininger and Thomas would work together on summer performances at the theatre for some 30 years.

Chris Allison, the actor who starred with him in the 2010 production as the professor’s former student, Mitch, will join Leininger on stage.

“This production brings to the front the role of the teacher and a student and the passion that he (Morrie) has invested into this relationship. I feel like us getting together again for “Tuesdays with Morrie” is like a gift to the University,” said Leininger.

More information is available on the School of Performing and Visual Arts at 704-406-4362.

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University offers a comprehensive academic experience that introduces students to the diverse world of ideas and to the people who think them, preparing them for professional success and for productive citizenship.