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Gardner-Webb, The Magazine 2021, Fall (Volume 56)

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GARDNER-WEBB

Volume 56, 2021

THE MAGAZINE



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- CELEBRATING OUR MILITARY STUDENTS AND ALUMNI
- DR. SHAWN E. HOLT NAMED AS FIRST DEAN OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
- STUDENT-ATHLETES SHINE
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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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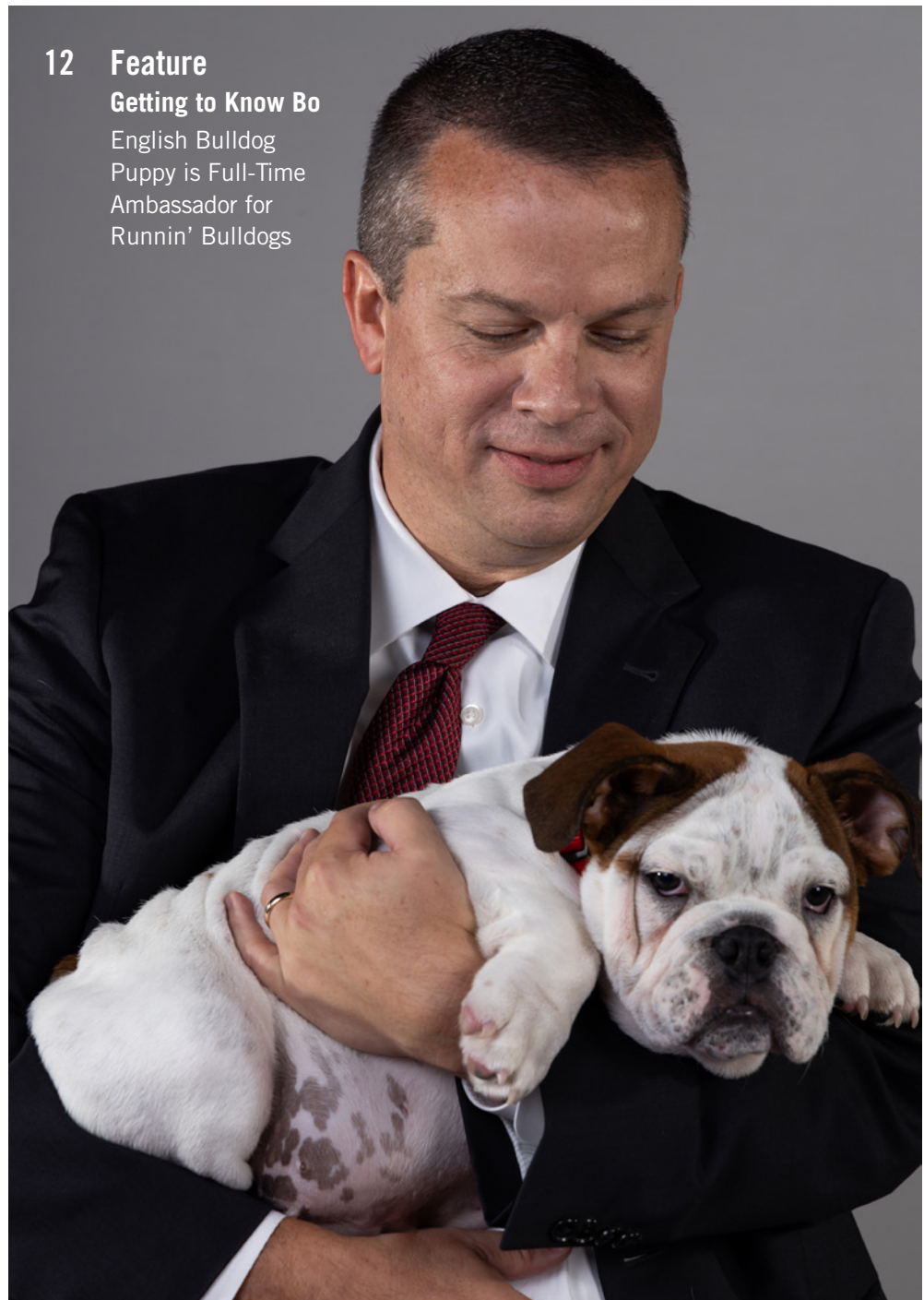
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Honoring veterans and educating students who answer the call to serve their country in the military.

GARDNER-WEBB • THE MAGAZINE

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*Unless otherwise noted, all stories credited to Jackie Bridges

Hello Gardner-Webb University alumni, friends, and family!

As I reflect on the year 2021, I cannot help but be amazed by all that our University has accomplished during these challenging times. With vision and a bit of daring, our faculty and staff have helped us strengthen enrollments in the midst of a continuing global pandemic. With creativity and an entrepreneurial spirit, we are solidifying our institution's financial foundation and preparing for a comprehensive capital campaign. With the heart, soul, mind and strength of relentless servant-leaders, our students are reaching out in new ways to support the communities that surround our collegiate home. And with the dedication that can derive only from a truly important mission, the entire GWU team is making sure that Gardner-Webb attains and retains the well-deserved reputation as North Carolina's leader in Christian higher education.

As this issue's cover shows, we have been joined by a new jolt of Bulldog energy...Bo the Mascot! This guy has rapidly obtained BBOC (Big Bulldog on Campus) status, and he is clearly an instant fan favorite everywhere he goes. Bo even bumped my photo for this "From the President's Desk" letter! That's OK, because we are excited to introduce you to his friendly growl and his youthful tenacity. Bo knows Gardner-Webb, and we can't wait for you to get to know him.

In the pages that follow, you will get a taste of the activity that is creating such a buzz at Gardner-Webb. We have many new faces—new faculty, new staff, new coaches, new administrative leaders—in the GWU family portrait. With the infusion of so much talent has come new ideas, new enthusiasm, and a renewed commitment to our University's 116-year-old mission. It is, indeed, a great time to be a Runnin' Bulldog!

I am especially pleased that during the past academic year Gardner-Webb made

important strides to acknowledge those among our extended community who serve both God and Country, namely our military. Those efforts included a Veterans Day recognition service, a special ROTC officers commissioning ceremony, and a Memorial Day prayer service outside historic Hamrick Hall to remember those who died in service to the United States. Memorial Day has now been made a recognized holiday at Gardner-Webb. An important institutional goal moving forward is to make our degree programs more accessible and affordable for veterans, active military, and their families. Our recently launched Homeland Security Administration degree program is sure to attract the interest of many. I invite you to read about some of our impactful military connections in this magazine's feature story.

In addition to consuming the news from this latest iteration of *Gardner-Webb: The Magazine*, I also want to encourage you to be an active part of writing Gardner-Webb's next chapter. There are some 35,000 living GW alumni spread out across the country and across the globe. Our goal is to connect or reconnect with as many of you as possible. We are eager to hear your stories, to learn how GW prepared you for life and for your career, and to determine how we may best continue to stay engaged in each other's respective journeys.

There are big things on Gardner-Webb's near horizon. We are working to better align our academic degree programs with the interests of students and with the demands of a dynamic, diverse global society. We are redoubling our commitment to college athletics and to the more than 600 student-athletes who compete for Gardner-Webb in 22 Division-I NCAA sports. We have acquired new property in Boiling Springs that will allow us



to begin dreaming about showcase facilities that will serve the community and make us all proud.

Clearly, though, we need you if we are to realize our dreams. We want you to believe in Gardner-Webb, to support our students, and to invest in our collective future. If you are a fan of Runnin' Bulldog athletics and want to see your favorite teams win championships, then I invite you to become a member of the Bulldog Club. If you want Gardner-Webb to grow in size and stature, then I invite you to help us identify persons of vision and boldness who can contribute to our ambitious capital projects. If you want to ensure that Gardner-Webb is never again a "hidden gem" or North Carolina's "best kept secret," then help us spread the good news about this special place, its people, and its programs. Finally, if you want to see our graduates succeed, please connect with us to identify internships and job opportunities for them. Hire a Gardner-Webb grad, and you know they'll work like a 'Dawg!

Enjoy *Gardner-Webb: The Magazine*!

With very best wishes,

Dr. William M. Downs
President

NEWS & NOTES

New Undergraduate and Graduate Degree Programs Offered



Gardner-Webb increased its academic offerings during 2020 and 2021 with several new programs.

- **Master of Sport Management Degree**

The Godbold School of Business added a Master of Sport Management (MSM) degree program in October 2020. Designed for students who want to advance their careers in this growing field, this fully online program addresses a need identified in a

survey of GWU business students. The new master's degree can be completed in one or two years. Courses are offered in five eight-week units throughout the year, and the 30 credit-hour curriculum includes a required internship capstone course.

- **Master of Divinity Degree Transitions to 78 Hours**

Beginning with the fall semester 2020, the School of Divinity transitioned its 90-hour Master of Divinity degree to a 78-hour program. Recognized by The Association of Theological Schools in the United States and Canada (ATS), the accredited program

streamlines the curriculum, which combines core requirements with six concentration areas. This adjustment maintains academic excellence and further promotes the overall goal of the School of Divinity to serve the church.

- **Two Master's in Strength and Conditioning Options**

Beginning with the fall semester 2020, Gardner-Webb offered a Master of Science degree in strength and conditioning. The new program has two enrollment options: one allows for completion of the Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science along with the master's degree in five years or less, while the other option allows for fall, spring, or

summer enrollment into a two-year program to complete the master's degree. Both programs rely heavily upon standards set by the National Strength and Conditioning Association (NSCA). The Master of Science includes extensive internship and laboratory work and is designed to be practical and hands on.

- **Biochemistry Degree**

In fall semester 2021, a new undergraduate degree in biochemistry was added to meet the needs of students who plan to pursue graduate degrees for health-related fields or biomedical research. Students could also go directly into jobs with chemical or pharmaceutical companies. The biochemistry major requires

62 program hours, with an overall requirement of 120 hours to complete the Bachelor of Science degree. Requirements include a professional readiness component, and students will demonstrate an understanding of fundamental introductory principles in chemistry, biology, biochemistry, and molecular biology.

- **Homeland Security Administration**

An undergraduate degree in Homeland Security Administration also began in the fall of 2021. The program provides students an awareness of the emerging, multi-faceted role of law enforcement officers today and the daily challenges they face in society. While developing knowledge in homeland security, criminal justice, and legal

areas, graduates will be prepared to address 21st century domestic and global homeland security issues. The new major requires 36-37 hours, with an overall requirement of 120 hours to complete the Bachelor of Science degree. The program includes an internship/field experience in an approved agency.

The Gallery of Distinguished Alumni Adds Four Members

Honorees include Dr. Patricia Palmer, Rear Adm. Terry Eddinger, Jon-Eric Sullivan and Dr. Kimberly Moore

Gardner-Webb honored outstanding members of the University family as GWU's 2021 Distinguished Alumni of The Year during Homecoming activities on Oct. 23. Since

1957, The Gallery of Distinguished Alumni has honored alumni who have made significant contributions in their fields of service and the communities in which they serve.

Four alumni were recognized with this prestigious title, including Dr. Patricia Greene Palmer, Rear Adm. Terry Eddinger, Jon-Eric Sullivan, and Dr. Kimberly Moore.



Dr. Patricia Greene Palmer

Class of 1957

From 1967 to 2000, Palmer taught Biology, Botany, and Field Botany at Louisburg (N.C.) College. In 1989, she was awarded the Naomi Dickens Shaw Award for Faculty Teaching Excellence. For the last 10 years of her tenure there, Palmer served as chairman of the science department. Palmer entered Gardner-Webb Junior College as a freshman with the intention of majoring in English. But after one semester in Paul Stacy's biology class, she switched her major to biology and earned her associate's degree. After receiving her bachelor's degree in biology from Appalachian State University (Boone), she returned to Gardner-Webb, where she was a physical education and biology lab instructor for three years. She also coached the women's basketball team, sponsored the cheerleaders and planned the May Day Activities every year.

With full scholarships from the National Science Foundation, Palmer earned a M.A.T. in Biology at Duke University, a Ph.D. in Botany at North Carolina State University, and spent a year as a Post-Doctoral Student in Botany at Duke. In the summer of 1976, she spent four months studying West African grasses and collecting samples of mud rich in fossil grass leaves from Lake Bosumtwi in Ghana. By determining the kind of grasses growing at different times, it helped to reconstruct the past climate of the region. Five Monographs describing this research were published by the Smithsonian Press.

In the 1960s, Palmer began collecting N.C. Pottery that led to a fun lifetime hobby. After retiring from teaching at Louisburg College in 2000, she opened Lane and Hamilton Antiques that specializes in old N.C. Pottery and other small antiques.



Terry Eddinger

Class of 1988

Eddinger, a native of Thomasville, N.C., was promoted to Rear Admiral in October 2020, becoming the highest-ranking Navy Reserve chaplain. Currently, he serves as the Deputy Chief of Chaplains for Reserve Matters. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Gardner-Webb in 1988; a Master of Divinity degree from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1990, and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in Old Testament Archaeology/Ancient Near Eastern History from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1995. He completed additional studies at US Naval War College, the Joint Forces Staff College, the University of Virginia, and the University of Missouri, Kansas City.

➤ You can find an expanded feature on Eddinger in this issue as we salute the military on pages 17 – 27.



Jon-Eric Sullivan

Class of 2000

Sullivan is in his 18th season with the Green Bay Packers and fourth as co-director of player personnel. Sullivan spent two seasons (2016-17) as the director of college scouting after being promoted on June 16, 2016. Sullivan previously served as a college scout covering the Central Plains region (2008-11) and the Southeast region (2012-15) after working as the team's National Football Scouting representative to the annual NFL Scouting Combine and authoring evaluations of all prospective seniors in the Southwest region.

Sullivan joined the team's football operations department on July 12, 2004, having previously served as a scouting intern during Green Bay's 2003 training camp.

He played his junior and senior seasons (1998-99) as a wide receiver at Gardner-Webb. As a senior, he was named to the all-conference team after leading the Bulldogs with 43 receptions. Previously, he played at the University of South Carolina from 1995-97 before transferring to Gardner-Webb.

Following his college football career, Sullivan served as a student-assistant receivers coach at Gardner-Webb for one season. Though officially listed as a student assistant, he actually served as the primary position coach for the receivers.

Sullivan obtained a Bachelor of Arts in social science from Gardner-Webb in December 2000, and then worked three years (2001-04) for GMAC's sales and credit administration departments before joining the Packers' staff.



Dr. Kimberly D. Moore

Classes of 2014 and 2017

Moore is the Senior Pastor of Emmanuel Missionary Baptist Church of Gastonia, N.C. Her election to the office marks a historic event in Gaston County. On Nov. 8, 2008, Moore became the first female to be elected to serve as a senior pastor within the Gaston County Baptist Association.

She received a Bachelor of Science degree from Lander University in Greenwood, S.C. She is a two-time graduate of Gardner-Webb University, receiving her Master of Divinity Degree in Pastoral Studies in 2014. She was the Robert L. Lamb Ministry Award Recipient and served as commencement speaker. She earned her Doctor of Divinity Degree in Pastoral Ministries in 2017 and is a former adjunct professor for Gardner-Webb's School of Divinity.

Moore received her license to preach the Gospel in August 1995, and was ordained in 2001. She served as guest minister for the 2017 Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina Elevating Preaching Conference and in 2018, was the keynote speaker for the General Baptist State Convention of North Carolina.

She is the founder and CEO of Kimberly Moore Ministries; this restorative outreach ministry offers Kingdom Influencer Classes, Ministry Mentoring Sessions, and Regional Conferences.

Moore was appointed to serve on the North Carolina Council for Women and Youth by Governor Roy Cooper in 2019. She also serves on the Board for Gaston Together, working to develop ways to enhance unity within Gaston County. In addition, she is a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Inc.

She is the author of "Ministry Moments with Pastor Kimberly Moore: 30 Day Devotional" and "The Bible in 52 Weeks: Devotional for Women," which is a 2020 Amazon Best Seller.

Enrollment Records Established in 2020 Fall and 2021 Spring Semesters



Gardner-Webb welcomed the third largest freshmen class in school history for Fall Semester 2020. The 471 members of the Class of 2024 began their first fall semester on Aug. 19, 2020. Gardner-Webb's total fall enrollment—in undergraduate, Degree Completion, and graduate programs—is approximately 3,500, with nearly 1,200 students living on campus.

For the spring 2021 semester, Gardner-Webb's students came from the most diverse geographical areas in school history. According to Dr. Jeff Tubbs, vice president for planning and institutional effectiveness, the students represented 23 foreign countries, 43 states, and 91 North Carolina counties, breaking school records in each category.

Tuition Freeze Extended and Admissions Incentive Expanded

In October 2020, the “Foothills Commitment,” a program originally offered to students in Cleveland, Rutherford and Gaston counties, expanded to include residents of Lincoln County. Through the initiative, GWU provides total aid of at least \$15,610, which was a minimum of 50 percent off tuition, for any new freshman living on campus that is a resident these counties.

In February 2021, Gardner-Webb announced a freeze on tuition for the third year in a row for traditional undergraduate students enrolled in the Boiling Springs campus program. The freeze applied to incoming freshmen, transfer students, and current undergraduates for fall 2021.



GWU Faculty Approves Reduction in Undergraduate Hours Required for Graduation

In November 2020, the Gardner-Webb faculty approved a reduction in the number of undergraduate credit hours required for graduation from 128 to 120.

The result benefits traditional undergraduate students and provides a more transfer-friendly pathway for students transitioning to GWU from other universities. The revisions went into effect in the 2021-2022 academic year.

In the new general education model,

students will take between 32-33 credit hours in “The Foundational Experience,” and 12-16 hours in “The Exploratory Experience.” The Foundation courses—such as English, math, history, the arts, languages, religion and science—provide the skills and knowledge for the exploratory classes, which examine areas of interest, such as business, foreign languages, literature, sciences, fine arts and performing arts.

Gardner-Webb's Model United Nations Team Makes History at Virtual Event

The Model U.N. team from Gardner-Webb made history in April 2021 at the virtual Southern Regional Model U.N. (SRMUN). Representing the Republic of Korea (ROK), the members brought home GWU's first overall team award. Additionally, the duo of Rob Elovecky and Eliza Gunson were awarded Most Diplomatic and Best Delegation, while Grace Burgin and Nani Perez were awarded Most Diplomatic in their committee.

Model U.N. is a simulation of a United Nations conference. Participating schools represent their country at the conference and pursue its interests in various committee meetings, such as World Health Organization, International Criminal Police Organization, International Court of Justice and others.

The team began preparing in January by writing position papers that outline the



ROK's view on assigned topics. Burgin said the virtual setting had some challenges, but the committee chairs were patient to answer questions and help with any technical glitches.

Members of the Model U.N. team, from left, are Rob Elovecky, Eliza Gunson, Kayleigh Floyd, Nani Perez, and Head Delegate Grace Burgin. Not pictured: Lucas Gardner.



GARDNER-WEBB
UNIVERSITY



They will go. Will you send them?

The Gardner-Webb Mission Endowment Fund (MEF) provides scholarships for students to answer God's call to go on missions—to serve and love their neighbors.

They Will Go...

Every year, GWU students travel the state, country and world on short-term mission trips. These trips are life-changing experiences that shape students' view of the world, serving others and the calling to "Love God, Love People." Each student is responsible for the cost of their trip—no matter how expensive. International trips can often cost a student more than \$2,500. Many students desire to have this mission immersion experience and feel called to go, but they lack the financial resources or community of support to participate. The MEF bridges that gap for them.

Help us Send our Next Team!

For information contact Aaron Hinton at 704-406-4101 or donate online at

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

It's Our Mission



Serve

Our students go when God calls, locally and globally.



Sustain

We partner with existing ministries to encourage their efforts.



Grow

We join the Great Commission, recruiting disciples for Jesus.

Gardner-Webb School of Divinity Appoints Three Faculty Members to Endowed Positions

Three Gardner-Webb University faculty members in the M. Christopher White School of Divinity were honored in the fall of 2020. Dr. Danny West, Dr. Jim McConnell and Dr. Sophia Steibel were appointed to endowed chair positions.

“Selections are based on a distinguished record of scholarly or creative accomplishment, a strong record of teaching, exemplary leaderships and service to their school or university, and their promise as a productive scholar,” said Dr. Ben Leslie, GWU provost and executive vice president. “The holder of the chair is also provided with funding to support projects of research or teaching innovation.”

Gardner-Webb has four faculty-endowed chairs at the University. In addition to three in the School of Divinity, the Goldbold School of Business has the Dover Endowed Chair of Business, established by the Dover Foundation in 1999 to promote quality of instruction. Dr. Anthony Negbenebor, professor of economics and international business and assistant vice president for business development and partnerships, was named Dover Chair in 2005.

Following is more information about each new appointment:



W. Randall Lolley
Chair for Pastoral Studies

Dr. Danny West

The W. Randall Lolley Chair for Pastoral Studies was established to honor Dr. W. Randall Lolley, long-time pastor and Southeastern Seminary president in recognition of his commitment to congregational ministry. The Endowed Chair is awarded to West, who serves as the director of the Doctor of Ministry Program, director of Ministry Leadership Development and professor of preaching and pastoral studies.



Bob D. Shepherd
Chair of Biblical Studies

Dr. Jim McConnell

The Bob D. Shepherd Chair of Biblical Studies was established to honor Dr. Bob Shepherd. The Shepherd Endowed Chair in Biblical Studies was the first of its kind at Gardner-Webb and was established in 1998. It honors Shepherd's service as pastor, university administrator and Gardner-Webb University trustee. The Endowed Chair is awarded to McConnell, who serves as the associate dean of the School of Divinity and associate professor of New Testament Interpretation, teaching classes in all areas of New Testament as well as biblical Greek.



Bonnie Price Chair for
Christian Formation and Leadership

Dr. Sophia Steibel

The Bonnie Price Chair for Christian Formation and Leadership in the School of Divinity is a new chair beginning with the 2020-2021 academic year. The Chair was established to honor Bonnie Price, long-time School of Divinity friend and supporter, in recognition of her commitment to Christian formation and ministry. The Endowed Chair is awarded to Steibel, who serves as a professor of Christian education and spiritual formation in the School of Divinity. She holds her Bachelor of Arts from Gardner-Webb University and the Master of Arts in Religious Education and Ph.D. from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Gardner-Webb President Presents Awards to Faculty

In the 2021 spring semester, Gardner-Webb President Dr. William M. Downs presented awards to three faculty members. Dr. Mitch Porter, assistant professor in the Gardner-Webb University School of Education, was recognized with the President's Early Career Award for his exceptional productivity in scholarship, creative discovery, and instruction.

In addition, Downs presented Grant-Seeking Reassignment Awards to Dr. Steven Harmon, professor of historical theology, and Dr. Patricia Sparti, professor of music. This honor provides recipients the time to prepare and submit a proposal for extramural funding in support of scholarly activities and program enhancement.

The Early Career Award is presented to qualified full-time assistant professors and honors Porter's outstanding performance in professional development and excellence in community service. The annual award includes an additional \$1,000 in professional development funds for Porter to use during the 2021-22 academic year.

Porter began teaching at Gardner-Webb in 2019 and also serves as the quality assurance and assessment coordinator for the School of Education. He has taught Research Design and Methodology in Curriculum and Instruction, Research Module in Educational Leadership, Educational Psychology, and has been a guest lecturer for Dr. James Morgan's Positive Psychology course.

In addition to his teaching duties, Porter serves as a dissertation coach, advises doctoral candidates and provides methodological and statistical assistance for their dissertations. In his role as quality assurance and assessment coordinator, he assists the College of Education with course assessments and evaluations. He also prepares and reviews documentation for the education program's licensure and accreditation. He is managing editor for Journal of Organizational and Educational Leadership (JOEL). He organizes incoming papers by providing initial evaluations and assigning reviewers to submitted papers. To

date, he has finalized three issues of JOEL on Gardner-Webb's Digital Commons.

Porter received his Bachelor of Arts in English and Foreign Languages from the University of Idaho (Moscow) in 2008. He earned a Master of Arts in Linguistics from California State University Long Beach in 2010. After receiving his master's degree, he taught in China at the Beijing Language and Culture University. While in China, he was also curriculum developer and coordinator for Zhongjie Education International and an assessment developer and editor for the National Education Examination Authority.

Harmon's grant-seeking proposal is titled, "Launching a Center for Black Church Life in the School of Divinity of Gardner-Webb University." He envisions that the Center would strengthen the life of predominately African American churches in the ecclesial constituency of Gardner-Webb and its School of Divinity. The School would provide a theological education for their current and future ministers that ground them in the traditions of these churches through curricular attention and faculty representation.

Sparti's project, "Bringing Music to the Piedmont, Educational Concerts in High Schools, and outdoor Orchestra Pops Concerts to the Region," is a plan to educate 11th grade students and the entire community on the joys of orchestral music and benefits of the arts. Sparti will write two new shows, and perform them in Cleveland, Rutherford, and Gaston counties. Outdoor pops concerts will bring music to the public.

For the academic year 2020-2021, Dr. Stefka Eddins, professor of chemistry and department chair, received an award and has used her time to create a proposal for "A Research-Based Learning Initiative to Strengthen Undergraduate Science Education at a Liberal Arts Institution." Her proposal seeks to adapt Research-Based Learning (RBL) to undergraduate learning. The RBL approach aims to merge research and instruction within established undergraduate curricula.



Dr. Mitch Porter



Dr. Steven Harmon



Dr. Patricia Sparti



Dr. Stefka Eddins

New Administrators Join Staff, Retirees and Emerita Honored

Gardner-Webb welcomed new administrators and honored several staff and faculty members on their retirements in 2020-2021:

The new administrators are:



Lesley Villarose, of Virginia, vice president for Student Development and dean of students.



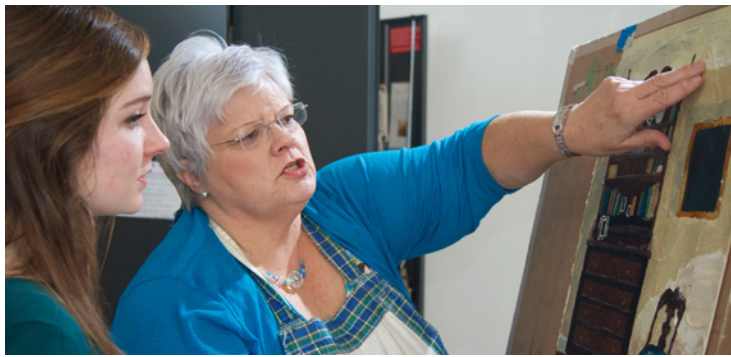
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Tim Shuey, of Pennsylvania, vice president of Finance and Administration.



Dr. Shawn E. Holt, of Petersburg, Va., dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.



Faculty Emerita Designation

Susan Bell, who retired in 2021 as a professor of art, was honored with emerita status. Bell worked at GWU for 35 years, having taught art education for the classroom teacher, art history, Christianity and art studio: drawing, painting, life drawing, ceramics, and media: acrylics, pastels, watercolor and collage. She won several student choice awards for her teaching. She also led extensive museum studies in 10 countries and 60 American museums and is a frequent lecturer for church, school and community groups.

Retirees:

The following staff and faculty retired:

Mike Hardin	Senior vice president for administration	30 years
Scott White	Director of human resources; instructor	23 years
Debra Bridges	Student success coach	10 years
Frances Sizemore	Associate director of human resources; instructor	27 years
Sandra Bailes	Interim director of enrollment, digital learning	19 years
Kelly Collum	Academic advisor and success coach	19 years
Joey Bridges	Server and systems administrator	18 years
Kathi Simpson	Office manager for Gayle Bolt Price School of Graduate Studies	10 years
Karen Ferree	Administrative assistant to the associate provost for professional and graduate studies and the associate provost of arts and sciences	16 years
Cynthia Wallace	Director of Counseling Center	27 years
Becky Wright	Administrative assistant to the provost and executive vice president	21 years
Roberta Parris	Senior accountant	35 years
Freida Conner	Secretary for the Noel Program	21 years
Susan Bell	Professor of art	35 years
Robert Carey	Professor of Communication Studies; chair, Department of Communication and New Media	24 years
Mary High	Associate professor of American Sign Language; director for ASL Program	21 years
James Parker	Assistant director for student conduct and residence education	8 years
Linda Smith	Payroll director	30 years

A Promise for the Future

Planned Giving Helps Create Lasting Legacies

Gardner-Webb's Advancement Team is pleased to welcome Randy Reed as the University's new Director of Planned Giving. As a key part of our advancement operations, planned giving allows alumni and friends of the University to create a lasting legacy through the use of a bequest intention, a trust, life insurance or by making the University a beneficiary of a retirement account.

When making the decision to come to Gardner-Webb, the University appealed to Reed for several reasons, most notably the small-town atmosphere and the beauty of the campus. "I've had the pleasure of meeting a few alumni as well as several members of the faculty," he relayed. "It's really a sense of family here at Gardner-

Webb. I look forward to meeting and working with other alumni."

Reed's primary role will be to work with donors to establish planned/legacy gifts that align their interests with the mission of Gardner-Webb. "If we know the gift intent during their lifetime, we can ensure the gift is used in accordance with the donor's wishes and ensure it will have the greatest impact for the University," Reed noted. "There could also be tax advantages associated with planned giving, depending on an individual's situation."

Reed can be reached at 704-406-2237 or rreed2@gardner-webb.edu to share more about the many opportunities available to support Gardner-Webb for generations to come.



Randy Reed



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96% of our students receive scholarship assistance and/or financial aid.



Did you know that GWU students come from 44 states and 28 international countries?



“I thought the puppy looked like a Bo. I looked up the characteristics of the name, and a couple of the adjectives are powerful and tough.”

Karen Davis, administrative assistant to the dean and copy cataloger in the GWU Library

Getting to Know **Bo**

English Bulldog Puppy is Full-Time Ambassador for Runnin' Bulldogs

A new face on the Gardner-Webb campus draws a crowd wherever he waddles. Live mascot, Bo, an English bulldog, was officially introduced to the campus community at the Fall Academic Convocation on Aug. 24, 2021.

His predecessor, Roebuck, a 7-year-old English bulldog, retired and has been designated with mascot emeritus status.

The new pup is from a breeder in Garner, N.C. His name was selected from more than 200 entries submitted for consideration. “Historically, ‘Bo’ derives as a nickname meaning ‘to live’ or ‘living’—making it a perfect match for the infusion of life we’re bringing to this new era of Bulldog sports,” noted GWU President Dr. William M. Downs.

Karen Davis, administrative assistant to the dean and copy cataloger in the GWU Library, submitted the name, Bo, after studying his picture and doing a little research. “I thought the puppy looked like a Bo,” she said. “I looked up the characteristics of the name, and a couple of the adjectives are powerful and tough.”





Names like Butch, Chins, Victor, Barney and Roebuck have been attached to the live bulldog mascots. Mack, Mac and Lulu have been connected to the costumed mascots.

The University plans to involve Bo in full-time activities with the enrollment team, alumni group, athletics teams and community groups as well. He will be a full-time ambassador for the Runnin’ Bulldogs.

“We know many were sad to hear that Roebuck would be retiring, but the joy of watching our puppy grow to become our much-loved mascot is exciting,” shared Kim Kreuzman, GWU social media manager. “He’s got some big paws to fill, and he is already working on bulldog basics—sit, stay, and high-five!”

A university staff member (and family) are Bo’s caretakers, and others across the campus community will be designated to provide daily attention, support and training for him. Dr. Deana Moseley Lawrence of Hope Animal Hospital in Shelby, N.C., will provide veterinary services.

History of the Live Mascot

Throughout the years, the bulldog has been represented in numerous forms. Live bulldogs,

costumed mascots and athletic branded logos have all been featured in some fashion for GWU.

Names like Butch, Chins, Victor, Barney and Roebuck have been attached to the live bulldog mascots. Mack, Mac and Lulu have been connected to the costumed mascots, and the branded athletic logo has carried the names Mack and Mac.

Founded in 1905 as a boarding high school (Boiling Springs High School), the first recorded usage of the bulldog as a mascot for the school was in 1922.

Butch I (1944-1953)

As the Boiling Springs High School transitioned to a college carrying the name of a former North Carolina Governor, O. Max Gardner, and his wife, Fay Webb Gardner, Gardner-Webb College introduced the first live mascot. Butch I lived at the home of football coach Wayne Bradburn, and later long-time Dean of Instruction, J.O. Terrell.



Butch II (1953-1955)

Gardner-Webb Football player Gerald Freeman (Shelby, N.C.) allowed his family bulldog to serve as the adopted mascot during a transitional period as the school searched for a permanent replacement.

Chins (1955-1960)

Chins graced the Gardner-Webb campus thanks to community supporters Hubert Seaford Plaster, a Shelby, N.C. dentist, and his wife, Ruth Howie Plaster, an instructor of organ at Gardner-Webb. They served as caretakers for the next Gardner-Webb Mascot, Chins, for five years.

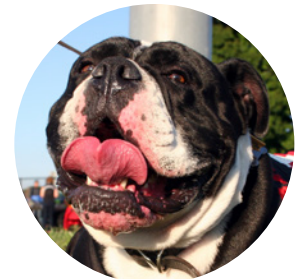
Victor I (1960-1969) and Victor II (1969-1970)

Horace “Bud” McSwain, 1952 alumnus, Boiling Springs postmaster, and supporter for the Gardner-Webb athletics program, provided his services for 10 years as the relationship liaison between two live mascots and the school.

There were no official documented live mascots for over four decades.

Barney (2010-2014) >

Barney was the family member of Lou Ann Scates, Gardner-Webb registrar, her husband, Doug, and son, Andy. Dr. Dee Hunt, vice president of Student Development, and GWU President Dr. Frank Bonner, agreed it was time after several decades to revitalize the live mascot program for the University and officially inaugurated Barney into the Runnin’ Bulldog family as a young pup. Barney retired in 2014 and passed away in October 2020.



Roebuck (2015-2021) >

Roebuck, under the care of Brooke Greene, was named in honor of Mike Roebuck, an avid runner, cyclist, and triathlete. Mike had worked at Gardner-Webb for nearly 20 years in roles like assistant athletics director for Academic Services and director of Financial Aid. Mike passed away unexpectedly on March 4, 2015, yet his name still lived on when Roebuck was introduced.







A Celebration of Service



BY JACKIE BRIDGES

Gardner-Webb University has a long history of honoring veterans and educating students who answer the call to serve their country in the military. These exceptional students live out the University's motto, "Pro Deo Et Humanitate," (For God and Humanity) as they work in communities all over the world.

As early as 1925, E.B. Hamrick Memorial Hall was dedicated to honor individuals from Cleveland and Rutherford Counties who died while serving in World War I. The building was rededicated in 2021 during GWU's first Memorial Day Service, recognizing two more Gardner-Webb alumni who gave their lives in service to their country: Lt. Col. William Barkley Jr., class of 1975; and U.S. Army

Green Beret, Staff Sgt. Jerry Gass, class of 2003. The University also observes special recognitions during the year to pay tribute to our military, such as Veteran's Day, Memorial Day and Military Appreciation Day.

The GWU community is pleased to honor the men and women of the military and especially thankful for those individuals who are either part of the student population or proud alumni.

On the following pages, you'll meet a few of those alumni—a purple heart recipient who traded in her uniform for nursing scrubs; a chaplain who's attained the highest position he can in the U.S. Navy chaplain community; and a professional football player who left the field for a career in the U.S. Air Force.



‘For God and for the Navy’



GWU Alumnus, Terry Eddinger, '88, Promoted to Rear Admiral in U.S. Naval Reserves Chaplain Community

In 25 years of service to the U.S. Naval Reserves, Rear Adm. Terry Eddinger, Deputy Chief of Chaplains for Reserve Matters, has held at least nine other titles including an Old Testament professor, college administrator, humanitarian assistance advisor, archaeologist, certified master diver, runner, speaker, author and volunteer.

How does the 1988 alumnus of Gardner-Webb University find time to do everything? “You just take advantage of opportunities,” responded Eddinger, of Winston-Salem, N.C. “Everybody says, ‘Someday I want to do that,’ but someday is not on the calendar.”

Eddinger became Rear Admiral on Oct. 1, 2020. He is the first Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) chaplain to achieve this rank in CBF’s nearly 30-year history. “I have a sense of pride in that I managed to reach the highest position a person can attain in the U.S. Navy chaplain community,” he reflected. “With that said, I also feel the weight of responsibility that goes with the promotion. I want to do the best job I can for God and for the Navy.”

Eddinger has had assignments including five active-duty tours in Iraq; Guantanamo Bay, Cuba; USS John F. Kennedy; Rota, Spain; and Marine Corps Air Base New River (Jacksonville, N.C.). In Guantanamo, he learned to reach soldiers who would never come to his office on their own. “From those events, one or two would come to see me afterward and say, ‘I had this issue come up and I thought I would come by and talk to you.’”



Rear Adm. Terry Eddinger, left, serves at a funeral for a World War II veteran.

His service includes eight years with the Marines and four and one-half years with the Coast Guard, because Navy chaplains serve all three branches. He has been awarded the Fleet Marine Force Qualified Officer Chaplain Insignia, Defense Meritorious Service Medal, Meritorious Service Medal (two awards), the Navy and Marine Corps Commendation Medal (four awards), Coast Guard Commendation Medal (two awards), and various other service, campaign, unit, and personal recognitions.

Eddinger supervises the training, administration, and operational readiness for over 240 chaplains and 218 enlisted personnel. In everything he does, his guiding principle is to align the chaplain community with the goals of the Navy. “My job is to keep everybody going,

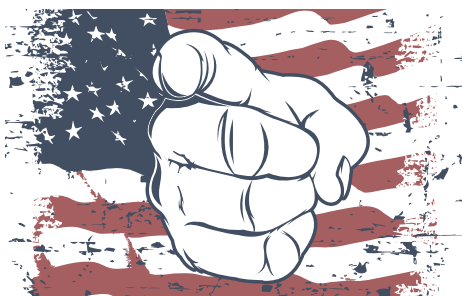
keep everybody in contact and get ahold of people as quickly as we need them,” Eddinger observed. “There’s a physical readiness, a mental readiness, and we have what we call a spiritual readiness—helping somebody become spiritually ready before deployment.”

When Eddinger was a student at Gardner-Webb in 1986, his goal was to teach college. He learned to think critically and developed his research and writing skills with the help of GWU professors. “The faculty just made you want to follow them and want to teach,” Eddinger affirmed.

After earning a Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies, he went to Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (Kansas City, Mo.) for his Master of Divinity. There, for the first time, he began to consider chaplaincy in the Navy. “Gulf

War fighting started in 1991,” Eddinger explained. “My suite mate was the oldest guy in seminary—he was 60—and he had a son, who was a fighter pilot. We were concerned about his safety.”

He applied for chaplaincy in 1995 and was commissioned as a lieutenant junior grade in the Navy. The same year, he finished his Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Old Testament at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Louisville, Ky.) and began teaching at Carolina Graduate School of Divinity (Greensboro, N.C.). He taught and served as an administrator there for twenty years. He is the author of “Malachi: A Handbook on the Hebrew Text,” co-author for a book on pronouncing Bible names, and contributing author to journals and reference books.



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Alumni, if you serve or have served in the U.S. military, we want to know.

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Chasing a Different Dream

Chad Geter, '16, Leaves Behind Football to Serve His Country in the Air Force



Chad Geter was a three-time All-Conference selection at Gardner-Webb.

BY JACOB CONLEY,
Star Sports Correspondent

From a young age, football players dream of playing the game they love on the professional level. Former Gardner-Webb standout Chad Geter, '16, realized that dream, but is now leaving it behind to pursue a career in the United States Air Force.

Geter was playing for the Saskatchewan Roughriders of the Canadian Football League (CFL), but declined another contract offer for what he said is a more stable career in the military.

"I loved playing for Saskatchewan," Geter said. "It is a small tight-knit community, a lot like Gardner-Webb. I will miss it, but I felt like it was time to go do something different."

“You are a team in the Air Force, just like in football.”

Chad Geter, '16

Leaving the Roughriders ends a football career full of twists and turns for Geter. The Columbia, S.C., native did not start playing football until he was in eighth grade, much older than most players who eventually join the professional ranks.

“I wanted to play basketball,” Geter remembers. “I didn’t want anything to do with football until a coach convinced me to give it a try. I kept getting better and better. I was team MVP and was named to the All-State Team as a senior.”

Because he came late to football, Geter drew little recruiting interest from colleges. His only Division I offers came from Gardner-Webb and South Carolina State.

Geter was a three-time All-Conference selection and earned All-American status after his senior season with the Runnin’ Bulldogs.

“Chad was a great player for us, and made everyone around him better,” former GWU head coach Carroll McCray said. “Opponents would have to specifically decide how they would account for him each week. Most of all, he is respected and loved by all he is around. Now he will serve our country and continue to lead those around him.”

Geter, 26, graduated from GWU in 2016 and drew interest from several NFL teams, including the San Francisco 49ers in 2017, but an injury ended his bid to make a NFL roster that season, so he turned his attention to the CFL. He played in a total of 26 games over two seasons with both Saskatchewan and Montreal, garnering 27 total tackles, including six sacks.

When COVID-19 forced the cancellation of the CFL season in 2020, Geter said it gave him time to think about his



long-term goals. “I’m still healthy, and I wanted to do something to serve others while I could,” he said.

Even though going from a professional football player to serving in the military may seem like two totally different careers, Geter sees some similarities: “You are a team in the Air Force, just like in football.”

Reprinted with permission from The Shelby Star.

Chad Geter played in a total of 26 games over two seasons with both Saskatchewan and Montreal in the CFL.

A Second Call to Service



Samantha and Benjamin Christopher were deployed to Afghanistan in January 2013.

Marine Veteran, Purple Heart Recipient, Samantha Christopher, '21, Serves as Nurse in Civilian World

BY JACKIE BRIDGES

On a mission in Afghanistan in 2013, Marine Staff Sgt. Samantha Christopher, of Grover, N.C., and her platoon became the target of a large-scale attack. “In a matter of seconds, there were 73 casualties, and I felt helpless,” recalled the Gardner-Webb University alumna. “I knew I wanted to help more but did not have the medical knowledge or background to provide advanced care. It was in that moment that I felt called to serve as a nurse.”

In May 2021, when she received her Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (ABSIN) from GWU, Samantha answered the call to serve for a second time.

As a critical care nurse for COVID-19 patients in the Medical/Pulmonary Intensive Care Unit at Spartanburg, S.C. Regional Medical Center, Christopher can’t help but feeling a little déjà vu. “To hear my fellow staff members, nurses and advanced practitioners talk it reminds me of the military, just with civilians,” she explained. “I hear them think out loud, ‘I don’t know if I can do this again.’ Yet they can’t see how unbelievably strong and resilient they are. It is an honor to learn from them. I feel like I found the Marines of the hospital—first to fight, last to leave, adapt and overcome, and learning on the fly. I feel God brought me through war to deploy for the third time, except now in garrison as a civilian.”

She chose Gardner-Webb’s Hunt School of Nursing for its small-town atmosphere and strong Christian

“My husband and I knew from the beginning that what we experienced together was special. We knew this was something we were going to carry for the rest of our lives. We healed together and we grew together—and are still growing.”

Samantha Christopher, Marine Veteran, Purple Heart Recipient

values. “Gardner-Webb was the first and only program I applied for,” she affirmed. “The admissions staff and faculty were beyond helpful and caring. How many students can say their teachers and staff personally cover them in prayer, by name?”

She continued, “As I work with patients in the hospital, I hear my professors’ voices in my head. I hear Mrs. (Ashley) Hull say, ‘Oral care is so important, go above and beyond what you’re supposed to,’ as I swab, clean and suction my patients’ mouths. I hear (the late) Dr. Sharon Creed-Hall as I do my head-to-toe assessment, telling me to take my time and do it right. It’s a privilege to work at the same hospital she did. I feel it is my duty to carry out her legacy.”

Samantha and her husband, Sgt. Benjamin Christopher, were deployed to Afghanistan in January 2013. She was awarded the Purple Heart after she suffered a traumatic brain injury when her vehicle hit an improvised explosive device (IED). Two weeks after her incident, Benjamin sustained a traumatic brain injury when his truck team was struck by an IED for a second time that deployment. He was also awarded the Purple Heart. Samantha said there are less than six “Purple Heart couples” in the United States.

“My husband and I knew from the beginning that what we experienced together was special,” Samantha related. “We knew this was something we were going to carry for the rest of our lives. We healed together and we grew together—and are still growing.”



Samantha and Benjamin Christopher are one of less than six “Purple Heart Couples” in the United States. Above, they, along with other Purple Heart recipients, were honored at a Carolina Panthers game in 2019.

Soldier's Best Friend



U.S. Air Force Maj. Christina Pryor Pittman and Avalon

Maj. Christina P. Pittman, '21, is First Military Chaplain to Have Certified Therapy Assistance Dog

BY JACKIE BRIDGES

As the burly guardsmen played with a couple of puppies, the tension left the room and the group relaxed. The scene marked the first time U.S. Air Force Maj. Christina Pryor Pittman, 169th Fighter Wing chaplain, utilized animal therapy at McEntire Joint National Guard Base in Columbia, S.C. She brought the animals on the base in 2018 after a death in the unit.

“The excitement and engagement with the dogs brought new life and opened lines of communication,” shared Pittman, a May 2021 graduate of the Gardner-Webb M. Christopher White School of Divinity. “I knew then that animal visits needed to continue, and I began to set goals to develop assistance dog integration for mental, emotional, and spiritual care.”

Her efforts to find a full-time assistance dog led her to National Education of Assistance Dog Services (NEADS) in Princeton, Mass. This 501(c)(3) organization provides therapy assistance dogs to veterans and others, and offered to match her with a dog for ministry on the base.

In the meantime, Pittman reconnected with Dr. Doug Dickens, a professor in the GWU School of Divinity, who had been her mentor in the late 90s at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS) in Fort Worth, Texas. He told her about his work at Gardner-Webb and encouraged her to get her doctorate.

She enrolled in Gardner-Webb's Doctor of Ministry in the Pastoral Care and Counseling program and on the first day of class she was matched with her assistance dog, Avalon. “I was extremely

excited, and she has been a part of my education journey at Gardner-Webb from the very beginning,” Pittman reflected. “I had an opportunity to share her with my cohort and they really enjoyed having the opportunity to engage with her. She came with me each class and because of her high training as a service dog, she integrated and did beautifully during our meeting times and everyone else got to enjoy her as well.”

At commencement, Avalon walked across the stage with Pittman. She is the first officially recognized certified assistance therapy dog assigned to a service member in the U.S. Military Chaplain Corps. Because she and Avalon are trailblazers, Pittman decided to focus her dissertation on learning more about the impacts of therapy assistance dogs.

Pittman valued the support from Dickens and the rest of the faculty and was grateful they worked around her deployments. “It’s a pioneering field,” she noted. “Without the flexibility and the openness of the approval process and the research project, I don’t know that it would have some of the attention and the organization that it needed.”

She discovered two important concepts in her research. “Chaplains have been a part of the military since the early colonial and establishment times,” Pittman asserted. “What I discovered is that chaplains, regardless of whether you have an assistance dog or not, are always going to have a place, because they are the spiritual and emotional caregivers and because, holistically, that’s what we all have as a part of ourselves—the spiritual piece, whether or not you attest to a certain faith or religion.”



The second part of her dissertation affirmed the valuable contributions of the chaplain and therapy assistance dog partnership. “I discovered that the already heightened level of impact from the chaplain was only enhanced more by the presence of a service dog,” she said. “And also to see that in areas where a chaplain could not engage with a member, the service dog opened that door. I watched Avalon engage in this physical contact that helped to open and break down some emotional walls. Having that safe space to share emotions enhances that spiritual resiliency we talk about.”

Avalon is the first officially recognized certified assistance therapy dog assigned to a service member in the U.S. Military Chaplain Corps.



These alumni answered the call to serve, and the Gardner-Webb community salutes their commitment to America and its citizens.

The University welcomes veterans to campus with a dedicated VA benefits expert. For students, the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) will prepare them to commission as second lieutenants while earning a bachelor’s degree.

To find out more about ROTC or resources available to veterans, contact admissions@gardner-webb.edu.

“I’m a student-athlete and student comes first.”

Khalilah Conway, '22



Student First

Nursing Major Khalilah Conway, '22, Finds Success in Classroom and on the Track

Gardner-Webb University student-athlete Khalilah Conway, '22, of Raleigh, N.C., has two demanding interests. A sprinter and multi-event competitor on the track and field team, she's also a student in the Hunt School of Nursing. Her hard work and dedication was recognized in 2021 when she was named to the Big South Track & Field All-Academic Team.

While earning a high GPA in the nursing program, Conway's season was highlighted by personal records on the track and two first place finishes from the Winthrop Spring Invitational, first place in the women's 400-meter hurdles with a time of 1:05.29, and first place in the women's high jump by hitting a mark of 1.57 meters.

“I’m a student-athlete and student comes first,” Conway asserted. “This



past year was my junior year and that's the hardest year in the nursing program. When we started, my coach was like, "This is your junior year, so you have to tell me when sometimes things are too much and you need a break."

After practice and weight training, she would study for several hours. "It takes so much time to know the information that you can't just do it the night before," she advised. "There's so much on the line when learning in this career field. You can't just mess up, because that's someone's life."

Like her approach to studying, Conway was methodical when deciding on a career. She knew she wanted to help people by going into health care and contemplated becoming a pediatrician. However, as she thought about the responsibilities of

doctors and nurses, she felt nursing suited her best.

"I care about helping people," she explained. "Nurses have a much more personable dedication to the patient. You see them so much more often. You are their backbone while they are there (under your care). I knew that I would probably make a bigger impact if I was a nurse."

Her high school track coach found Gardner-Webb because she told him she wanted to run track at a college with a top-notch nursing program, and decided GWU met all of her expectations. "It had Christian values; I can run and I can still build my career," she stated. "It really was the perfect place."

When COVID-19 forced a switch to online learning, students couldn't

train in the physical hospital setting. "I was doing my skill check offs on Minnie Mouses and wash cloths and anything that I could find," she recalled. Eventually, the nursing students returned to the hospital setting with Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and new protocols. "It's like COVID opened your eyes," she commented. "Almost like (PPE) was a safe haven, because as long as you were keeping yourself protected, you were keeping other people protected."

She feels prepared and confident to begin her career. "My teachers care about us," she commended. "There are those who will put a smile on our faces, pray for us and encourage us to keep on going. I feel like that has also been a big part of me making it."

Burgin started at GWU in the nursing program, but when she took biology she became fascinated by how each individual cell works and changed her major to biology.



Embracing the Balance

Grace Burgin, '22,
Works Toward
Entering the
Medical Field

Senior Grace Burgin, of Iron Station, N.C., enjoys having a full schedule. At Gardner-Webb University, Burgin balances several responsibilities along with her studies—Model U.N. Head Delegate, national representative for GWU’s Alpha Chi, Writing Center consultant and teacher assistant in the natural sciences department. She’s also a member of the Pre-Health Society and Tri Beta Honor Society.

“I’ve always been really involved,” Burgin affirmed. “I just don’t like being

an idle person. At the beginning of the semester, I make a color-coded schedule. I have to use a lot of free time to study and finish my homework, which is fine; I just make sure to take breaks in between. Sometimes on the weekends I like to go to the Broad River and walk on the trails.”

A biology major with a concentration in biomedical sciences, Burgin’s career choice is obstetrics/gynecology or emergency medicine. She was an Undergraduate Summer Scholar in 2020, and presented her research at the

Alpha Chi national virtual conference in 2021. She won a scholarship for that study on the effects of fad or popular diets on fetal nutrition and development. During summer break Burgin took a condensed Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) certification class. “It was a lot of information really fast, and ambulance ride-a-longs, which are really fun, but stressful,” Burgin shared.

Burgin was also a CNA for two years, but she plans to work as an EMT after graduation. “To get into the (graduate) program I really want to, I’m going to have to take a gap year because of the way my classes have fallen,” Burgin shared. “While EMT is actually not diagnostic, it’s a lot more medical. By using context clues and symptoms to determine what may be going on with the patient, you do what you can to treat them on the way to the hospital.”

Burgin started at GWU in the nursing program, but when she took biology she became fascinated by how each individual cell works and changed her major to biology.



“I just felt like that was what the Lord was leading me to,” she observed. “I knew I could start there and still go into health care.”

She chose health care because she admires the compassion and dedication of the nurses in her family and others she’s observed in the profession. “When my family did foster care, I was in and out of

the hospital a lot with my foster brothers, because they had a lot of conditions,” Burgin explained. “I saw the impact that healthcare workers can make on a person. Making them feel physically better can also help them feel mentally and emotionally better and that really had an impact on me.”

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Dr. Shawn E. Holt, Dean of the Gardner-Webb College of Arts & Sciences surrounded by Gardner-Webb students (with special guest “Bo,” our live mascot)

New Foundations

Scientist, Author, and Professor, Dr. Shawn E. Holt, is Named Dean of the Gardner-Webb College of Arts & Sciences

BY JACKIE BRIDGES

Dr. Shawn E. Holt is the founding Dean of the Gardner-Webb University College of Arts & Sciences. Since 2016, Holt has served as professor and chair of the Department of Natural Science & Mathematics at Richard Bland College of William & Mary (RBC), in Petersburg, Va.

“The College of Arts & Sciences is a well-established academic division at Gardner-Webb, but we are just now naming the college’s first dean,” shared University President Dr. William M. Downs. “Dr. Holt impresses me by his understanding that inspirational teaching and impactful research can indeed complement one another. His commitment to advancing the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, and fine arts is firm. I look forward to his innovative leadership.”

As the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, Holt reports to the Provost. He has a significant role in determining and implementing the University’s strategic priorities, providing leadership to academic programs, fostering faculty and staff development, and supporting engaged student learning.

Dr. Ben Leslie, retiring Provost and Executive Vice President for GWU, said Holt was chosen after a rigorous nine-month national search process from a pool of highly qualified, diverse and exceptional candidates. “We sought an individual who would bring not only a solid record of teaching and research to the University, but also someone with a demonstrated record of academic leadership and a vision for innovation and advancement,” Leslie stated.

“My hope is to provide creative guidance to our faculty and students as we take the College of Arts & Sciences to the next level.”

Dr. Shawn E. Holt

The new dean’s responsibilities will also include collaborating with the Office of Enrollment Management to grow enrollment and the Office of Advancement on fundraising activities. He will determine new program development and program review, and support and promote faculty research efforts as well as the University’s robust program of undergraduate research. He will work closely with other deans and professional program leaders to integrate the arts and sciences with professional programs.

Holt is looking forward to fostering and nurturing long-term relationships as an administrator, faculty member and community leader. “My wife, Abbey, and I are thrilled to have joined the Gardner-Webb family,” Holt asserted. “My primary focus in the first few weeks on campus has been to get to know people and processes as a way to understand what makes the University such a special place for our students, faculty, and staff. My hope is to provide creative guidance to our faculty and students as we take the College of Arts & Sciences to the next level.”

Holt has authored or co-authored 72 peer-reviewed papers on such topics as virology, aging, cancer, and stem cell biology. At RBC, he taught and created courses in Science, Engineering, Mathematics, Computer Science, and Health. He served on committees such as Institutional Effectiveness, Strategic Planning, Reaccreditation and Reaffirmation, Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), Racial Justice and Equity Taskforce, and Institutional Review Board. He was involved in hiring, mentoring, developing, and reviewing faculty while managing an annual budget of \$1.6 million. At RBC, he started the men’s and women’s golf teams and served as their head coach, while also coaching men’s soccer.

In other areas, Holt serves as scientific review officer for General Dynamics IT, where he directs grant review panels for applications submitted to the Department of Defense Materiel Command and the Department of Education. In 2005, Holt founded Presidium Athletics, LLC, in Midlothian, Va., and served as the chief

scientific officer. He developed novel technology for athletic injury prevention and protection, which lead investment funding, two published patents, and the development of products for various sports.

From 1998 to 2011, Holt taught in the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Medicine in Richmond, Va. During this time, he obtained more than \$6 million in extramural funding and published more than 50 papers and 6 book chapters. He presented invited lectures and mentored many students, fellows and junior faculty. He was the director of the Pathology Graduate Program and a member of the Massey Cancer Center, the Molecular Biology and Genetic Program, and the Graduate Education and Graduate Admissions Committees.

Through the years, Holt has served on community and ministry boards, including the Virginia High School League Debate, the Board for Richmond Emmaus, the Metro Richmond STEM Fair, the Inner-City Baseball Clinic in Richmond, and a minister with Stephen Ministries.

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The Power of Transcending Gender Barriers

Assistant Professor Dr. Aihua Zhang
Researches Women's Roles in China

BY JACKIE BRIDGES

In her childhood, Dr. Aihua Zhang, assistant professor of history at Gardner-Webb University, was fascinated by Chinese and East Asian cartoons, stories and books. As she grew older, these interests led her to a deeper study of cultures and histories.

Then, in college, she began exploring the relationships among East Asian countries and their interactions with the rest of the world. She also focused on women's roles in history and their contribution to China's modern transformation.

Since arriving at Gardner-Webb in

2019, she has taught Western Civilization I, Modern Chinese History and Western Civilization II. She came to Gardner-Webb from New Jersey, where she taught at Stockton University. Her desire was to teach at a university where she could combine her faith with her academic interests. "I have my wish fulfilled at Gardner-Webb," she observed. "I like the collegiality among the faculty members and their cooperative interactions. Students are humble, understanding, smart, and promising. The whole community is like a big family: sharing, supportive, and caring about each other."

Because Chinese women's history was not studied in China, Zhang came to the United States to pursue her Master of Arts in history at Bowling Green State University in Ohio in 2005. She earned her Ph.D. at State University of

By exploring the interplay among gender, religion, and modernity, her book explains the part Chinese Christian women played in the country's quest for a strong nation in general and in Republican Beijing's modern transformation in particular.

New York at Stony Brook in 2015. “The United States takes the lead in the study of women and gender,” Zhang affirmed. “Also, I was curious how the Chinese history was approached in the U.S. I wanted to make a comparison between the Chinese and Western perspectives, which I believed would open my eyes and deepen my historical understanding.”

The Gardner-Webb faculty recognized her at the beginning of the 2021 Fall Semester with The Scholarship Award for her excellence in research and scholarly contribution to a field. Zhang has published works that can be found both nationally and internationally and she has presented papers at regional, national and international conferences. One of her most significant contributions is collaboration with other scholars to create a public database on women and social movements since 1820.

Most recently, her research, “Reinventing Tradition and Indigenizing Modernity: the Beijing New Women and Their Leisure in the Early Decades of the

20th Century,” was published in Women’s History Review.

The article focuses on Beijing, because Zhang said most other scholarly works on the New Woman in Republican China tend to discuss Shanghai and present them as an icon of the country’s modernity. “In response to this scholarly imbalance, my paper examines the generally neglected Beijing New Women with a concentration on their leisure-time activities such as skating, appreciating Beijing opera, and hosting salons (venues for intellectual exchange, socials and friendship),” Zhang described.

Zhang added that the New Woman distinguished herself from traditional women in her Western-style education, her modern look, and her social and political awareness. She argues that their activities transcended entrenched gender boundaries and demonstrated their power. These pastimes also went beyond self-recreation and turned out to be instrumental in sustaining the city’s

modern enterprises through the hard times of 1928 to 1937.

Zhang also published a book this year, “Materializing a Gendered Modernity: The Beijing Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) (1927-1937).”

By exploring the interplay among gender, religion, and modernity, her book explains the part Chinese Christian women played in the country’s quest for a strong nation in general and in Republican Beijing’s modern transformation in particular. “With a focus on the Beijing YWCA, I examine how the Association, guided by their Christian beliefs, tailored its Western models and devised new programs to meet the city’s demands,” Zhang shared. “Its programs ranged from providing women- and child-oriented facilities to promoting constructive recreational activities, and from reforming home and family to improving public health, some of which turned out to be pioneering work in social and community service in China.”



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“He was a pro before he’s a pro. He doesn’t let anything get to him and just goes out there and takes care of business.”

Jim Chester, Head Coach

miles per hour on his fastball.

In 2020, before the season was cut short due to COVID-19, Miller thought his career was over. Then, the NCAA granted baseball players an extra year of eligibility. Miller took the opportunity to jump from Division III to Division I, and came to GWU because of Coach Jim Chester.

“Coach (Chester) is a Pennsylvania guy, and a lot of people I know and trust speak very highly of him,” Miller informed.

A six-foot-five, 205-pound right-hander, Miller finished the 2021 season with an 8-1 record, forging a 3.30 ERA with 121 strikeouts in 92.2 innings of work. In fifteen trips to the mound, Miller fanned 10 or more batters on seven occasions, including a season-high 13 in a 6-2 win at Campbell on March 5.

Miller led the Big South Conference and ranked 21st in the nation with 121 strikeouts, the second most in a single season by a Gardner-Webb pitcher and his .210 opponent batting average tops the all-time GWU listing.

Miller was a 2021 Big South All-Conference First Team selection and was named to the 2021 ABCA/Rawlings Division I Atlantic All-Region Second Team. He graduated from Gardner-Webb with a Master of Business Administration degree.

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Selected for ‘The Show’

Mason Miller, Selected in Third Round of MLB Draft by the Oakland Athletics

BY JACOB CONLEY,
Shelby Star Sports Correspondent

Gardner-Webb pitcher Mason Miller thought his baseball career was finished and was all set to enter the world of finance. However, Miller’s suit will be on the hanger a little longer in favor of a MLB uniform. He was selected in the third round of the 2021 Major League Baseball First-Year Player Draft by the Oakland Athletics.

“I love this game,” Miller asserted. “I feel like I’ve gotten a second chance, and I want to make the most of this opportunity.”

Miller is the fourth Runnin’ Bulldog to make it to “The Show,” joining Blake Lalli (Cubs), Emilio Pagan (Rays) and Jeremy Walker (Braves) in that exclusive fraternity.

“He was a pro before he’s a pro,” Head Coach Jim Chester said of Miller. “He doesn’t let anything get to him and just goes out there and takes care of business. He’s also great off the field and in the clubhouse. We were very blessed to have him here.”

His journey did not come without a few bumps in the road though. During his sophomore season at Division III Waynesburg University in Pennsylvania, Miller was diagnosed with Type I diabetes. Once the condition was treated, he gained roughly 35 pounds and several

Three Student-Athletes Presented Big South Christenberry Award for Academic Achievements

GWU's Athletic Training Staff Also Receive Conference Honor

The **Big South Conference** honored three student-athletes from Gardner-Webb University with the prestigious George A. Christenberry Award on May 26, 2021. The school's athletic training staff was also recognized with the Dr. Edward M. Singleton Leadership Award.

Named for George A. Christenberry, the former President of Augusta College (now Augusta University) and one of the founders of the Big South

Conference, the award is given to the student-athlete who attains the highest GPA during their undergraduate collegiate careers.

Gardner-Webb's honorees were lacrosse student-athlete Emily Dymont (4.00 in exercise science/health fitness), baseball student-athlete Ben LaSpaluto (4.00 in mathematics and accounting) and soccer student-athlete Ben Schade (4.00 in public relations).

Emily Dymont >

Dymont (Whitby, Ontario) was a member of the 2020 Women's Lacrosse All-Academic Team and a three-year letter winner. She helped the Runnin' Bulldogs to a program-best 6-3 start her junior season of 2020, and had three goals as well as six ground balls in eight games played that season.



Ben LaSpaluto >

LaSpaluto (Apex, N.C.) started all 41 games at shortstop this season with a .244 batting average, six doubles, one triple, five home runs and 21 RBI. He also has seven stolen bases and ranks third in the Big South in assists (117). LaSpaluto has helped the Runnin' Bulldogs clinch a top four seed in the upcoming Ingles Big South Baseball Championship.



Ben Schade >

Schade (Cary, N.C.) started three games at goalkeeper during the 2021 spring season, and allowed just three goals in his 280 minutes minding the net (0.96 goals against average). He tallied 16 saves (.842 saves percentage) and shutout Winthrop on March 31.



The **GW athletic training staff** was awarded the Dr. Edward M. Singleton Leadership Award for their dedicated work during this challenging 2020-21 year. Named for the Big South's first commissioner, the purpose of the award is to recognize a former Big South student-athlete or administrator that has exhibited exemplary leadership and character during their career. However, the Singleton Award Selection Committee waived its normal criteria for this year to recognize the extraordinary dedication of the staff during the pandemic.

The athletic training staff were critical in developing the conference's return to play policies, COVID-19 procedures and protocols, and decisions in regards to conference championship operations amid the coronavirus pandemic. In addition to their regular sports medicine responsibilities, the staff administered countless COVID-19 tests to student-athletes and coaches, and facilitated health and safety measures that allowed the Big South to conduct nearly all of its regular-season competition and championship events in a safe manner.

The Gardner-Webb athletic training staff members recognized were: Kevin Jones (Assistant Athletic Director of Athletic Training), Kat Ayotte, Kenny Cabe, Manny Castro, Tripp Hastings, Ema Kossin, Becca Webb, Makenzie Dugger, Davis Ison, Lindsay Perrin and Holly Price.

“She’s exactly what we need right now to energize GWU softball and power us to greatness.”

Dr. William Downs, Gardner-Webb President



New Softball Coach Bailey Wigness is a Proven Winner

She’s Won Conference Titles and Produced National Leaders

Bailey Wigness was named Gardner-Webb University’s new softball head coach in May 2021.

Wigness previously served as head coach at USC Beaufort for three seasons.

“Bailey Wigness is a proven winner,” praised Gardner-Webb President Dr. William Downs. “As a player, she’s won

a National Championship. As a coach, she’s turned programs around, had 40-win seasons, and won conference titles. She’s exactly what we need right now to energize GWU softball and power us to greatness.”

Wigness’ success as a head coach came quickly. She won 78 games in just

three seasons at USC Beaufort, leading the Sand Sharks to a 40-13 record, conference tournament title and a berth in the NAIA National Tournament in her first season.

“We had a strong candidate pool and Bailey quickly separated herself from the rest as she shared her vision for our softball student-athletes and the Gardner-Webb program,” said Vice President for Athletics Chuck Burch. “I am confident Bailey has developed the skills necessary to lead our softball program to compete for Big South Conference championships.”

Prior to taking over as head coach at USC Beaufort, Wigness served as an assistant coach for three seasons at Boise State University. In 2018, she was part of a staff that delivered the first conference title in program history and the Broncos’ first appearance in the NCAA Tournament.

She was an assistant coach at Arizona Christian University in 2015 when the program marked the biggest turnaround in the NAIA nationally that season.

“I am thrilled to join the Gardner-Webb family and excited for the opportunity to lead the softball program,” said Wigness. “It truly is a great place with so much potential and I felt at home the moment I stepped onto campus. I want to thank Dr. William Downs, Chuck Burch and the rest of the search committee for this incredible opportunity. I can’t wait to begin working with our student-athletes and developing a culture that sets them up for success on and off the field.”

Wigness played at national power Arizona State University, three times earning All-Pac 12 honors and leading the Sun Devils to the 2011 National Championship. Wigness graduated from Arizona State with a degree in communications and political science. She earned her master’s degree in educational leadership in 2018 from Boise State.



Eric Plunkett Named New Volleyball Coach

California Native Brings Wealth of Experience as a Student-Athlete and Coach

Eric Plunkett began his role as Gardner-Webb's head volleyball coach in May 2021. Plunkett joins GWU after serving as associate head coach and recruiting coordinator at Illinois State.

"We set out to find a coach with the energy and ambition to engineer a major turnaround for our volleyball program," shared Gardner-Webb President Dr. William M. Downs. "We needed a winner ... someone who had been part of conference championships and who is hungry for more. I believe we've found that in Coach Plunkett, and I can't wait to see him turn our Runnin' Bulldogs into contenders."

During his time with Illinois State, Plunkett played a key role in guiding the Redbirds to four Missouri Valley Conference titles and four appearances in the NCAA Division I Women's Volleyball Championship Tournament. In addition to his role as recruiting coordinator, Plunkett

had a hand in scouting, player development and execution of practice plans.

"Eric checked all of the boxes we were looking for in our next volleyball coach," said Vice President for Athletics Chuck Burch. "He brings a wealth of experience, both as a former student-athlete and coach, and understands the mission and values of Gardner-Webb University. I look forward to the impact Eric makes on our program."

Plunkett, a native of San Jose, Calif., also spent two seasons as an assistant coach with the men's team at Clarke University in Iowa and was a volunteer assistant coach on staff with the University of Mississippi in 2011. While at Clarke, he helped develop the program's first NAIA All-America selection and was tasked with organizing fundraising efforts for the program along with his other duties.

In addition to his degree in kinesiology from California Baptist in 2008, Plunkett earned a master's degree in coaching and

athletics administration from Concordia University Irvine in 2019.

"I am extremely grateful and excited to be the next head coach of the Gardner-Webb University volleyball program," said Plunkett. "I want to thank Dr. Downs, Chuck Burch, Pam Scruggs and all of the coaches and staff at Gardner-Webb for entrusting me to lead the program."

He also thanked Illinois State Head Coach Leah Johnson, Leanna Bordner and Kyle Brennan for their support as he transitioned to Gardner-Webb. "Through my support system at ISU to my new family at GWU, I am confident I can build something special at Gardner-Webb," he added.

Plunkett was the starting setter at California Baptist University for three seasons and was selected team captain as a senior. He led CBU to three NAIA National Championships and was a two-time All-NAIA Invitational Team choice.



From left, Linda Query Ramseur, Carolyn Bentley Lindsley, Bette Howell Edwards, Lynora Greene Essic and Betsy Thompson Robinson.

Unbreakable Bonds

Women Have Shared Joys and Sorrows for Nearly Six Decades

BY JACKIE BRIDGES

In 1962, seven young women came to Gardner-Webb, then a junior college, from six towns scattered across the Mountains, Piedmont and Coastal Plains of North Carolina.

They were strangers who ended up next door to each other on the third floor of Stroup Dormitory. Four of them became roommates. When they graduated two years later, these seven friends had forged a bond that has lasted nearly six decades. They've celebrated marriages, the births of children and grandchildren, and carried each other through sickness and times of sorrow.

"The first thing you do when you get some bad news, is you let them know," said Lynora Greene Essic, who grew up on a farm in Alleghany County, N.C., and now lives in Winston-Salem. "Letting them know is just like contacting the rest of the family."

In May 2021, Essic met Linda Query Ramseur of Concord, N.C., Carolyn Bentley Lindsley of Raleigh, N.C., Bette Howell Edwards, of Nashville, Tenn., and Betsy Thompson Robinson, of Stanley, N.C., at Gardner-Webb to have lunch, reminisce and tour the campus.

Essic commemorated the special day by presenting her friends with lapel pins featuring the GW seal and the words, "Friends since 1962." Two of their friends, Carolyn Pruitt Harris, of Canton, Ga., and Gwen Johnson McCormick, of Sanford, N.C., were unable to attend.

It was the first time the five of them had visited the campus as a group in 57 years. The women attended Gardner-Webb for different reasons. Lindsley was from Asheville, N.C., and her family expected her to go to Mars Hill, but she wanted to go to a Christian school closer

to Davidson, where her boyfriend was in college. "So I found Gardner-Webb," she said. "We've been married 56 years, have two sons, two grandsons and one granddaughter."

Essic grew up in the shadow of an older sister. "I said, 'I'm going somewhere where nobody knows me.' I'm not going to be known as so and so's daughter or sister," she related. "Nobody in Alleghany County had ever been to Gardner-Webb. The day I showed up here was the first day I ever saw the campus."

Edwards, originally from Waynesville, N.C., was the youngest of five children and looked up to her older brother, a GWU football player. "I thought he knew everything," she said. "Whatever he did, I did."



Carolyn Bentley Lindsley, Linda Query Ramseur, Betsy Thompson Robinson, Lynora Greene Essic and Bette Howell Edwards.

Robinson, who grew up in Stanley, applied late to Gardner-Webb. She wanted to get into dental assistant school but was put on a waiting list. “I knew I had to find somewhere to go, because it was understood in my family that you would go to college,” she said. “I knew two girls who were going to school here, so I applied and got in. I was a cheerleader for two years and met my husband here. He was a basketball player – it’s the all-American story.”

Ramseur, who also had a boyfriend at home, discovered Gardner-Webb when a representative of the college came to her school. “He was a good salesperson,” she said. “I got all the information and took it home and showed my mother and daddy. We came for a visit. My daddy learned it was Baptist and a Christian school and that was all he needed.”

The women reminisced about the strict rules in the 1960s and the Dean of Women Miss Ruth Kiser, who enforced them. In the evenings, students stayed in their rooms from 7-9 p.m. At 9:30 p.m., they could take a study break to walk to the bookstore and get a snack. They were expected to be back before lights out, which was 11 p.m. on weeknights and 11:30 p.m. on Saturday night—if you had a C average. “We had to sign in and sign out,” Edwards said. “When you walked in that door, Dean Kiser would stand there and look you up and down. If it was 5 minutes after 11, your parents were called.”

After graduation they went their separate ways, but stayed in touch. The first time they all got together was in 1979, and they have met yearly since. The women are thankful for the “divine intervention” that brought them together “We had some good times,” Robinson reflected after seeing their old dorm rooms. “I wouldn’t take anything for the experience we had.”

Engaging Body, Mind and Soul

Gardner-Webb Prepared Tia Howell, '19, with Knowledge and Professional Skills

After graduating from Gardner-Webb University in 2019 with a degree in exercise science, Tia Howell felt empowered to open her own business, Lift with Tia, in Gastonia, N.C. She incorporated everything she learned from the health and wellness topics in her major to the career readiness lessons provided by the GWU Center for Personal and Professional Development.

“I am so passionate about health and wellness, and studying exercise science allowed me to set myself apart in my field, so I can make a difference while being equipped with the right tools,” stated Howell, who lives in Mount Holly, N.C. “Personal training felt like the perfect thing to do after college because I’ve always leaned towards entrepreneurship, and I could impact others in a manner that fully aligned with my values and belief system.”

Shortly after she opened Lift with Tia in January 2020, COVID-19 forced businesses to close and modify. Howell changed her focus to private online coaching, offering online programs and other wellness resources. She also created an online challenge group for women. Personal, one-on-one training was conducted in a private room, wearing masks, and practicing social distancing.

No matter the format, Howell maintained her integrated approach to fitness. “So many people neglect their wellness—I’m talking mind, body, and soul,” Howell observed. “My coaching style in my business takes a holistic, evidence-based approach to helping everyone I work with truly elevate their bodies from the inside out with real methods and education.”

Howell believes the comprehensive education she received at Gardner-Webb equipped her to adapt to the changes caused by the pandemic. “There were numerous career development



opportunities and assignments given by the school and the Exercise Science Department,” she affirmed. “These opportunities made a real difference in how well I’ve operated in professional settings after graduating.”

Further, Gardner-Webb’s small class sizes and community atmosphere encouraged her success. “The professors are more involved, know everyone’s name, and can spread their energy around to make sure every student succeeds,” Howell related. “The Exercise Science Department was truly amazing for pushing each and every student to do nothing less than their best and to prepare as much as possible for life after undergrad.”

She concluded, “The research, organizational, and professional skills I have now are thanks to my time as a Gardner-Webb student. Commitment to education, professionalism, and service to others are all traits I’ll carry with me as a Gardner-Webb alumna.”



A Breath of Fresh Air

Tayuanne Dewberry Brings Positive Attitude, Business Acumen to Reintroduce Girl Scouting

BY JACKIE BRIDGES

Spend just five minutes talking with Tayuanne Dewberry, and she will inspire you to tackle any problem. Her smile, her energy and her positive attitude are contagious.

In April 2021, she became the chief executive officer of the Girl Scouts Hornets' Nest Council in Charlotte, N.C. "This is an amazing opportunity to work with the oldest girl-serving organization in the world," stated Dewberry. "I absolutely took this position because of the challenge lying ahead of the organization as a whole but particularly here in the Hornets' Nest Council, as well."

Dewberry brings 16 years of experience, 15 of them as executive director, working with the non-profit, Right Moves for Youth in Charlotte a support program helping students develop skills to succeed in school and life. "I really enjoy being in these types of positions, growing people and being able to invest and coach them along,"

she related. "I had the opportunity to work with some amazing people and to mentor some young talent."

After leaving Right Moves, she was executive director at Temple Israel in Charlotte, helping them navigate the COVID-19 pandemic by installing a state-of-the-art camera system, and a cloud-based phone system. "If you know anything about Conservative Judaism, they don't use technology during their Sabbath/Shabbat," she explained. "It was a practice of what's more important, preserving the ritual or connecting with the people. That was an absolute joy, an opportunity to use my business experience and acumen to impact positively a community that was reeling from the effects of the pandemic."

Embarking on the journey with Girl Scouts, Dewberry has ideas on how to breathe new life into the organization. Through the contacts

“The Girl Scout experience is the premier leadership opportunity for young girls, and we want to re-establish ourselves in the community as the organization that you want your young girl to be a part of.”

Tayuanne Dewberry, '97, '09

she made in the community at Right Moves, Dewberry hopes to diversify Girl Scouts' base of volunteers. Instead of relying only on the girls' moms to be involved, she wants to engage other community organizations and corporate partners as troop leaders and assistants.

“We have the opportunity to reintroduce Girl Scouting to a market that may not have understood exactly what it is,” she asserted. “When people think about Girl Scouts, they think about cookies, but the cookie program isn't about cookies. It's about instilling a sense of entrepreneurship in young girls, and who does business better than we (women) do. We are the ultimate business professionals. We run homes, we run companies. The Girl Scout experience is the premier leadership opportunity for young girls, and we want to re-establish ourselves in the community as the organization that you want your young girl to be a part of.”

Additionally, Girl Scouts is sharpening its focus on activities in science, technology, engineering and math. “We have diversified the offerings of Girl Scouts to meet the needs of the 21st century girl,” Dewberry expressed. “I want people to understand that we are trying to break down walls and kick in doors, and create opportunities for young girls. I'm excited about being a part of that, just being a catalyst for change and equitable practices for young girls. There are some gems out there, some leaders who are in the making, and Girl Scouts is in the forefront of creating that.”

The combination of her GWU degrees—a bachelor's in business administration management information systems (1997) and a master's in counseling with an education specialist certification (2009)—has prepared her for leadership. Further, as a member of the GWU women's basketball team, she learned the value of working as a team and doing your best in all situations.

“I was trained in the business school and many of the principles that I use to this day are things that I sat and listened to in Dr. (Glenn) Bottoms'

class or Dr. (Anthony) Negbenebor's,” she advised. “Later, I went back and got my master's, and I can't tell you how impactful that was to embed those theories in my business practice. People might say those things don't go together. Those things have absolutely been the magic blend for me.”

Continuing to reflect on her education, she concluded, “I would not be the success I am and would not have been able to achieve many of the milestones that I have without the impact of my experience at Gardner-Webb, and the support that I have gotten even after leaving there.”





‘Build Community. Give back. Have Fun.’

Jill and Heath Forbes Start Axe Throwing Business as a Ministry

BY JACKIE BRIDGES

Axe throwing is an addictive form of entertainment that’s similar to playing darts, except you throw an axe at the target. Heath and Jill Mayo Forbes, alumni of Gardner-Webb University, became so obsessed with the sport in 2018, they decided to open their own axe throwing lounge, Lumber Jill’s, in Summerville, S.C.

However, as first-time business owners, their goal went beyond offering entertainment. “We began to brainstorm that this could be something different, but we had to have a bigger purpose if we were going to upend our lives with it,” Jill stated. “We began to call it our church, disguised

as axe throwing where people could, ‘Build community. Give back. Have fun.’ That’s our motto. Where people could be seen and heard and feel like family. It has always been about way more than axes.”

They chose the name, Lumber Jill’s, as a play on her name and later found out just how appropriate it was. “In World War II when the British men left the lumber yards, the women who came in to take their place earned the title of ‘Lumberjills,’” she explained. “It was kind of England’s answer to Rosie the Riveter.”

Once a month they host “Axe of Kindness” night to highlight an important cause or

organization and “throw” support behind it. They have sponsored local soccer and flag football teams and helped raise money for an outreach ministry at their church, Seacoast. “The ministry is called The Dream Center, and one of the main functions is free health care,” Jill said. “The center serves about 4,000 patients a year free of charge. Lumber Jill’s was a sponsor for the Hope for Healing Walk, the clinic’s major fundraiser.”

In addition, Lumber Jill’s also partners with the Salvation Army for the holiday season. “We have an electronic kettle, serve as a toy donation site, our staff adopts families, and we volunteer together on a distribution day,” Jill informed.

Their customers brag on their employees, which affirms their mission to build community. “Over and over we hear about our great staff,” Jill observed. “It is truly the best part of what we do. We get this great opportunity to pour into them and watch them grow.”

Running the business is also something Jill, Heath, and their children do together. “One of the coolest things has been the investment our kids have had in this,” Jill asserted. “They worked weekend after weekend installing ceiling tiles and stripping doors and picking out bathroom paint. They’ve been there when we’ve begged Jesus for inspections to go well. They are part of the reason we refused to give up when it got hard. And, working with Heath has been a new chapter. It has revealed blind spots and beauties in our marriage. It’s been a wild ride.”

Heath and Jill met at Gardner-Webb in early 2000. She graduated in 2003 with a Bachelor of Arts in religious education, and he received a Bachelor of Science in mathematics in 2004. At that time, he was part of a dual enrollment program and also received a Bachelor of Science in civil engineering from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. “We signed up for a spring break mission trip to Puerto Rico through Campus Ministries,” Jill related. “We began dating a few months later, and got engaged on another Puerto Rico mission trip one-and-half years later.”

Some of their favorite classes were Intro to Ministries taught by Dr. Alice Cullinan, professor emerita of religion and Intro to New Testament taught by Dr. Ron Williams, professor emeritus



Heath and Jill met at Gardner-Webb in early 2000. She graduated in 2003 with a Bachelor of Arts in religious education, and he received a Bachelor of Science in mathematics in 2004.

of religious studies and philosophy, and Jill also enjoyed Christianity and Art class taught by Professor Emerita of Art Susan Bell. Williams led pre-marital counseling for the couple. “We rely on that daily, even after years of marriage,” she affirmed. “Ms. Bell mentored me outside of the classroom. My parents have her art hanging in their house. She spoke at our wedding, and my kids call her ‘Meme Susan.’”



Jennifer Kay Allen, left, and Stephanie Kay Webb with Jennifer's daughter, Piper.

Sisters in Focus

Jennifer Kay Allen, '05, and Stephanie Kay Webb, '06, Lean on Each Other's Strengths

BY JACKIE BRIDGES

After years of working for other people, sisters and Gardner-Webb University alumnae, Jennifer Kay Allen and Stephanie Kay Webb, launched out on their own, each building her own business through hard work, determination and shared resources.

Allen and her husband, Brian, work together at Wildwood Media in Waynesville, N.C. Allen does photography, and Brian is the videographer. They shoot mostly weddings and real estate videos. Webb owns Webb Digital Services in Shelby, N.C., and builds websites for customers and also shoots videos. When Webb first opened her business, Allen would send her customers for videography when she was booked. Additionally, Allen recommends her sister for website design.

"Stephanie does a lot of stuff on my website," Allen stated. "Even though I went to school for

graphic design, I've learned I really don't like to do it. I feel like I don't know anything about SEO (Search Engine Optimization) or how to get people to my website. Also the past year has been crazy, because so many weddings moved to this year (because of COVID-19). We have been shooting non-stop. It's nice that I can trust Stephanie. I can send her a flash drive with a couple of weddings on it and she can edit them too."

Allen is a 2005 alumna of GWU with a degree in graphic design and a minor in videography. Webb graduated in 2006 with bachelor's degrees in religion and communications. Natives of Statesville, N.C., they were familiar with the campus because they went to Crossroads Camp (founded by another GWU alumnus Clayton King) when they were teenagers.

Webb added the major in communications after talking to Allen’s advisor, Dr. Bob Carey. “Dr. Carey said we need more Christians in the communications field, and I had planned on being a missionary,” Webb reflected. “My first degree of study was religion, and I was so far along in that I didn’t want to completely change. That’s why I ended up double-majoring.”

Webb was overwhelmed her first day in a communications class. “One of the biggest takeaways I learned at Gardner-Webb was how to learn,” Webb stated. “Especially in the field of communications, things are always changing. I learned how to stay up-to date, know what the trends are and push myself to keep studying.”

Both women agree that establishing a business is hard work in the beginning. Happy and satisfied customers are the best advertising. “That first year, I took anything I could to have something to put on my website,” Allen stated. “You have to put in your leg work and after time, when you build up a good portfolio, people will start booking.”

While she was still working full-time outside the home, Webb started doing things on the side to earn extra money before leaving her job and going out on her own. “Really, though, it was because of all the work that Jennifer passed to me that I was able to stay afloat that first year,” she related.

They also mentioned the importance of being flexible. When weddings were cancelled because of COVID-19, Allen started doing more real estate videos. People didn’t want to go see a house in person, so realtors needed videos of the property. Webb focused on website design. “When everything shut down, people realized they needed to have a Facebook page, because people were looking for this stuff online,” she said. “People also had questions about how to get their ads seen on Facebook, and I was able to help with that.”

Because they both have families, the best part of owning a business is being able to be home with their children. They also enjoy celebrating with wedding couples and experiencing the beautiful venues—from mountaintops and waterfalls to more traditional sites.

“I feel really blessed because so many weddings I go to, I can’t believe this is what I get paid to do,” Allen asserted. “It’s really fun, and I feel like when I get behind the camera it’s just my element.”

Webb added, “I enjoy the weddings, but I would say I’m more of an introvert, so I love the editing probably more than going out. I feel like that’s where Jen and I work well together.”

Wildwood Media: wildwood.media

Webb Digital Services: webbdigitalservices.com





Removing Barriers to Communication

Kyle Kiser, '06, Teaches American Sign Language and Owns Interpreting Agency

BY JACKIE BRIDGES

When he was 5 years old, Kyle Kiser, a 2006 alumnus of Gardner-Webb University, taught a few basic signs in American Sign Language (ASL) to friends and members of his church. He didn't realize it then, but those early days were shaping his future as an educator.

Kiser was 2 years old when his parents discovered his hearing loss, and the whole family started learning sign language. "My parents hired a sign language tutor to come to our home and teach signs," Kiser shared. "Everyone in my family and extended family was involved every week at our home learning signs to communicate with me. I've always enjoyed teaching my first language to those who want to learn it. In so many ways, this brings

down a few communication barriers for us when we interact with the hearing community."

As a student in the ASL program at Gardner-Webb, Kiser built a strong network with local organizations that greatly helped him with his career. "What I loved most about GWU," Kiser noted, "was meeting and making more Deaf/Hard of Hearing friends. We shared a lot of the same growing up experiences. I also loved all of my professors and the Noel Center for Disability Resources' staff/faculty, because they all showed their care for our success and ensured all of our accommodation needs were met."

Kiser teaches ASL at Central Piedmont Community College in Charlotte in the Interpreter Education Program. Previously, he was the lead interpreting/ASL instructor in the interpreter training program at Blue Ridge Community College in Flat Rock, N.C. He serves as president of the North Carolina American Sign Language Teacher's Association. Kiser has more than 15 years of experience teaching ASL, and is featured in the

"Anyone can learn how to sign. ASL is the third most common language in our country today. There is a demand for ASL courses across the country, but we need more teachers."

Kyle Kiser, '06

book by Haili Hughes, "Humans in the Classroom: Exploring the Lives of Extraordinary Teachers," published in 2021.

Additionally, Kiser owns an interpreting agency, Clarity Language Access, LLC, which he operates in his hometown, Shelby, N.C. "We had a big discussion about what we wished we had in Shelby to provide support and resources to the Deaf, Hard-of-Hearing, and Deaf-Blind community," he explained. "Not only for our community but for the hearing community as well."

He started in 2015 with a team of two employees and two sub-contracted ASL interpreters. "Now, Clarity Language Access, LLC has a team of five employees and over 100 sub-contracted language interpreters who offer interpreting and translating services in different languages," Kiser said.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the agency moved quickly to provide access to customers and clients. "Clarity Language Access, LLC provides interpreting services to public schools in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Texas," Kiser informed. "We were able to continue to provide our services virtually for their Deaf/Hard of Hearing students. For other services we provide, such as a medical, legal, etc., our language interpreters followed the business protocols and the policies being enforced in the states where the services were provided."

In the midst of coping with these changes, Kiser expanded the business by offering language services in 200 spoken languages nationwide. "It's been challenging but great," Kiser affirmed. "Word-of-mouth and ASL are powerful tools in the business world. Our customers and clients are the reason why we're still here today."

Kiser is committed to advocating for and inspiring the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. He likes to share a quote from I. King Jordan, the first deaf president of Gallaudet University, the world's only university designed specifically for students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing. "Jordan said, 'Deaf people can do anything hearing people can do, except hear,'" Kiser said. "We're all human beings—just born differently. God gave our world variety



for a reason and with a purpose to learn about each other's differences and abilities."

He continued, "Anyone can learn how to sign. ASL is the third most common language in our country today. There is a demand for ASL courses across the country, but we need more teachers. Hopefully, one day we will be able to have more Deaf/Hard of Hearing teachers in our schools to offer this language and introduce our children earlier to the community rather than later."

“It was a special moment to see her win gold and to see the smile on her face and the tears in her eyes.”

Steve Van Dyne, coach



Paralympic Champion Mallory Weggemann

We Get to Write Our Own Ending

Paralympic Swimmer and Author,
Mallory Weggemann Reflects on Her Journey

BY SHELLEY STOCKTON

Sitting atop the podium on Aug. 27, 2021, three-time Paralympic swimmer and former Gardner-Webb student-athlete, Mallory Weggemann won her first gold medal of the Tokyo 2020 Paralympic Games. After nearly nine years of working towards this moment, it was finally here.

Like so many things, COVID-19 postponed the Paralympic Games, leaving athletes wondering if and when they would get to compete. “Hearing our training facilities were closing, it really forced us to get more creative with our training,” Weggemann remembers. “At the same time, every single one of us worldwide faced it. This wasn’t just something I felt in Minnesota, or Team USA felt, every single athlete and every single person went through this experience together.”

After she completed the 200-meter individual medley (with Paralympic Gold), she said the emotion hit as she got out of the pool to do her interview with NBC. “They had my family live-streamed into the interview, and I got to see them moments after realizing this dream that we’ve all fought so hard for—it was that understanding that love has the ability to persevere.”

Her husband, Jay Snyder, stayed connected via FaceTime. “Being unable to be in Tokyo cheering on Mallory in the stands was incredibly difficult; however, we were so grateful that the Games were able to take place and the world was able to witness the transformative power of the Paralympic Movement,” Snyder said. “We certainly made sure Mallory could hear us all the way from Minnesota as we cheered her at 3 a.m.!”

Weggemann’s swimming coach Steve Van Dyne, who also coached her and her sisters in high school, shared his thoughts about her wins in Tokyo. “To come away with three medals says a lot about who she is and the hurdles she’s overcome,” Van Dyne said. “It’s the icing on the cake to the journey we’ve been on the past seven years.”

She would go on to win a second gold medal in the 100-meter backstroke and earned a Paralympic record along the way. Weggemann also brought home a silver medal in the 50-meter butterfly at the Tokyo Games.

Weggemann’s journey back to the pool has not been an easy one. She started swimming competitively at seven years old, following in the footsteps of her two older sisters, but she hadn’t

planned to continue beyond high school. However, at 18 years old, her life changed forever when an epidural to treat nerve pain brought on by shingles left her paralyzed from the waist down.

She was determined that paralysis wouldn't define her and describes her journey in her new book, "Limitless: The Power of Hope and Resilience to Overcome Circumstance." Weggemann changed her story with the help of her family's motto, "good overcomes," and by accepting help.

After her paralysis, Weggemann's oldest sister took her to the 2008 U.S. Paralympic swimming trials at the University of Minnesota. The visit was a turning point for Weggemann, and only months after her injury she began to train and relearn how to swim without the use of her legs. By the end of the year, she was competing again and enrolled at Gardner-Webb University to swim under the guidance of Coach Mike Simpson.

"I was asking a number of people within the swimming community if they knew of any collegiate programs that were open to having an adaptive swimmer a part of their program; because, back in 2008, there weren't a lot of opportunities for athletes with disabilities," Weggemann said. "(GWU) was really receptive to having me a part of the team, and the disabilities program was phenomenal about figuring out how to make it all work and it seemed like the right fit."

The University renovated one of the dorms to meet Weggemann's needs and make her feel welcome. "They basically went into problem-solving mode over Christmas break and built a new entrance into one of the dorms for the lower floor, renovated one of the bathrooms on the main floors and made it wheelchair accessible, they did everything they could to make sure campus was ready for me when I arrived."

Weggemann competed on the GW Division I swim team, and transferred to the University of Minnesota when she made the U.S. national team to be closer to home and to train with her former coach.

"My teammates there (at GW) met me and knew me as I was, they weren't grieving the fact that I was newly paralyzed and that was really refreshing because I just got to find my stride," Weggemann remembers. "It was a really, really powerful experience that, while short,



Photo by Friedemann Vogel / Getty Images

was pivotal in my journey as I found a way to move forward after my injury."

In 2012, she competed in her first Paralympics Games in London, winning a gold and bronze medal. "When I sat atop of that Paralympic podium for me it was that journey coming full circle," Weggemann reflects. "That gold medal is going to forever hold a place in my heart because that truly was the moment where my world came together, and I got to feel light on the other side of what was otherwise an extremely challenging time in my life."

A couple years after the London Games, Weggemann fell and permanently injured her left arm when an ADA shower bench at her hotel collapsed. She persevered through surgeries, rehab, and training to compete in the 2014 Rio Paralympic Games.

In between training for the next Games, Weggemann married Jay Snyder, her manager and business partner. For their wedding, she walked down the aisle, with the use of leg braces and crutches, with her dad just like she always dreamed.

The couple co-founded TFA Group, an agency and production studio striving to change the perception of disability in society through the power of storytelling. Language has an impact on messaging. She provides an example, "Does somebody incur or suffer from a spinal cord injury. Those two things mean very different things. One gives power to the individual and one takes it away."

For more information on TFA Group and where to stream their content visit www.tfa-productions.com/#recent-work





From Rock bottom to Champion for Transformation

Kristie Puckett-Williams '14 Turns Trauma Behind Bars into Advocacy

BY ASHLEY MAHONEY, courtesy of The Charlotte Post

Jail shattered Kristie Puckett-Williams' remaining sense of self-worth. Drugs and alcohol had dulled the pain of domestic violence. Crime supported her habit, which landed Puckett-Williams in the Mecklenburg County Jail (Charlotte, N.C.) for months. Facing a cocaine trafficking charge in 2009, she took a plea deal to avoid giving birth in lockup, and twins Kade and Kaiden were born premature five days later. They spent 21 days in neonatal intensive care.

"It took a huge toll on my already fragile mental health state," Puckett-Williams said. "I entered into the system as a victim of severe domestic violence. None of the system's responses to that violence promoted any healing or transformation of that trauma. The only thing it ever did was exacerbate and compound that trauma."

Probation dominated much of Puckett-Williams' adult life, with the fear of returning to jail always hovering in the background. She participated in

a mandatory 10-month treatment program, as part of her plea deal, and the Department of Social Services required parenting classes in order to keep her children.

Puckett-Williams said sheer will to protect her family helped with navigating reentry. In addition to the twins, she has an older son, Julian Aguilar, 20. "I was determined that I was not going to allow the system to win," Puckett-Williams said. "I just made it up in my mind. They weren't getting my children. They weren't getting me."

Indicting the system

Going to school was one of the things on Puckett-Williams' many to-do lists upon reentry.

"When I went to Central Piedmont Community College, I found myself in a welcoming space with people who just wanted me to learn and to be the best version of myself that I could be," she said. "As a result of being in that type of environment, I found

myself in the human services program focusing on substance abuse. What I learned at the end of the day was that the things that have happened to me and my behaviors, my 'criminality' was a response to trauma that had been unanswered."

Puckett-Williams took it upon herself to critique and investigate the system she was caught up in. She earned an associate degree at CPCC, a bachelor's in human services from Gardner-Webb University (2014) and a master's in addiction and recovery counseling from Liberty University.

Puckett-Williams feels called to fight for people who are still in the trenches of addiction, abusive relationships, and incarceration.

"I knew the state's version of who I was, was not who I was," she said. "I had a duty to tell who I am, and not just who I am, but the value and the worth of people who have the same life experiences that I have."

Still fighting

Puckett-Williams is the Statewide Campaign for Smart Justice manager for the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of North Carolina, and a working scholar in mass incarceration with a focus on the treatment of women, including those who are pregnant.

She advocates for legislation like the North Carolina House Bill 608, Dignity for Women Who are Incarcerated. HB 608 was introduced in April 2021 and passed 113-0 in May.

"We know we have to legislate exactly what people need in order for it to happen," Puckett-Williams said. "That is how we approach our work. What do the people need? How will we get them what they need? Dignity for Women Who are Incarcerated is a huge example of that."

Under HB 608, leg and wrist restraints, restraints connected to other incarcerated persons and waist shackles would be barred during the second and third trimester of pregnancy, during labor or delivery, as well as six weeks postpartum. Pregnant incarcerated people would receive free prenatal, labor and delivery care, which Puckett-Williams did not have. It would also provide feminine hygiene products. It was ratified by the North Carolina General Assembly on Sept. 1. The act became effective on Dec. 1.

Triage upon return

Reentry comes with barriers that may push a person's mental health to the back burner. Immediate needs such as housing and employment dominate the

conversation, with less consideration given to the trauma of imprisonment or what led to incarceration in the first place.

"Overall health plays a huge role in your reentry and mental health, this is a huge component of a person's total wellness," said Puckett-Williams, who utilizes therapy and advocates for transformative healing spaces. "While you're inside of a cage languishing, your mental health is definitely at risk."

Mental health concerns for returning citizens extend beyond depression and/or anxiety. For many people, including Puckett-Williams, self-value is key in rewriting the narrative and moving forward.

"Your self-image, how you view yourself, how you view the world, how you view yourself in the world, your contribution to the world, all of those things are impacted by incarceration," she said. "How do you process this ... deep trauma that you've experienced, with no resources, when your immediate needs are an ID, someplace to live and somewhere to work? What are you going to eat? What clothes are you going to wear?"

She adds, "There has to be a way that we can allow people to reenter, come home and navigate everything that they need to navigate with assistance from the community."

"Your self-image, how you view yourself, how you view the world, how you view yourself in the world, your contribution to the world, all of those things are impacted by incarceration."

Kristie Puckett-Williams '14



This story was written as a part of a series supported by the Pulitzer Center. **This story has been modified from its original version. It has been formatted to fit this magazine and edited for content and length. The original story can be found in the July 15, 2021 edition of The Charlotte Post.*

“I have an opportunity to spread mental health awareness, educate other cultures on the Black experience, and promote/encourage counseling for people of color across the world.”

Shamanda Burston, '12



‘Wounded Healer’

Counselor and Author, Shamanda Burston, '12 and '14, Spreads Mental Health Awareness Through Filmmaking

BY JACKIE BRIDGES

Despite progress in recent years, mental health professionals acknowledge that there is still a significant stigma associated with mental health concerns. Shamanda Burston, a Gardner-Webb University alumna and mental health counselor, is on a mission to destigmatize mental illness by introducing and integrating mental health topics into the world of television and film.

Burston describes herself as a “wounded healer”—a person who has endured and survived her own pain and is now able to assist others in healing. In June 2019, she published an autobiographical book with that title. Now, she’s producing a film, also called “Wounded Healer,” that is adapted from the book and inspired by her own journey to wellness.

“I’m beyond excited about this film, as it has allowed me to utilize the education I acquired at Gardner-Webb as a mental health counseling

major; my over a decade of direct care experience in treating behavioral health/addictions; and my passion for filmmaking,” Burston shared. “I have an opportunity to spread mental health awareness, educate other cultures on the Black experience, and promote/encourage counseling for people of color across the world.”

Burston, who lives in Atlanta, Ga., graduated from GWU in 2012 with a Bachelor of Science Degree in human services and obtained her Master of Arts/Education Specialist degree in mental health counseling in 2014. As a first-generation college student and single mom, she appreciated the encouragement she received from Gardner-Webb’s faculty.

“I valued the openness and understanding of my professors,” she related. “I have to thank Dr. Willie Fleming, a person of color, who encouraged me to pursue the field of counseling. I am truly

grateful to Dr. James Morgan for serving as a reference during my internships and creating an opportunity for me to be a published researcher during my graduate program. Dr. Sharon Webb gave wonderful supervision and direction.”

Burston also learned how to overcome her fear of public speaking by creating and presenting research presentations for class and at national conferences. “Although I struggle with anxiety, I know that I wouldn’t have reached my current level of success without the practice, feedback and encouragement provided during my classes at GWU,” Burston stated.

Her former professors, Webb and Fleming, also served as references during her application process for Walden University in Minneapolis, Minn. Burston was accepted into the counselor education and supervision doctoral program, and plans to focus her dissertation research on cinematherapy.

During a crowdfunding campaign in July 2020, she raised \$21,000 in cash and services to produce her film. She is negotiating a distribution deal with a major streaming platform, and hopes the film will be available soon.

“This book-to-film adaptation follows the life of a resilient Black woman who happens to be a therapist,” Burston described. “She has worked for many years to help her patients address their issues but never addressed her own personal traumas. It was important to produce this film, especially at this time, due to the various societal challenges affecting the Black community.”

According to Burston, the Black community is more reluctant than others to seek counseling or therapy. “We are taught from a young age not to share what goes on inside our homes with ‘outsiders,’” she asserted. “We learn very early to suppress

our thoughts and feelings which leads to multiple issues—mental, physical and psychological. As a Black community, we’ve experienced extreme traumas that are passed down from generation to generation.”

The main character in her film lives with an autoimmune disease, which has triggers related to stress and anxiety. “The film also highlights the importance and effectiveness of family therapy,” Burston offered. “Family therapy allows all voices to be heard. It provides an opportunity for transparency and vulnerability and of course, healing.”

Burston’s book and film can help families begin the conversation. She offers more tips to help families discuss mental illness:

- Accept the fact that dysfunctional family systems are common.
- Be willing to learn about the mental illnesses within the family in an accepting and loving manner.
- Recognize that the healing journey cannot be forced. Just because one family member is ready, doesn’t mean the entire family will be ready or accepting of counseling or mental illness.
- It’s important to learn the “family roles” and which role we play within our family system. One person may be the “Family Hero,” “Black Sheep,” “Scapegoat,” “Enabler,” etc.
- Recognize that most mental illnesses are genetic. This can help alleviate the “blame game.”
- Identify motivation to finally address the family issues: To break generational curses and stop the cycles.
- Engage in individual therapy to identify and process personal triggers, traumas and areas for growth.

Her website: www.shamandaburston.com



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Christian Jessup



Thomas Manning

The Dance to Remember

Award-winning
Documentary
Captures GWU
Men's Basketball
Magical Season

BY JACKIE BRIDGES
AND NOEL MANNING

It has been said that during times of isolation or quarantine, some artists dig deeper into the well of creativity and offer works beyond their initial imagining. That is exactly what happened to four Gardner-Webb friends during the spring of 2020; they produced an award-winning documentary celebrating the Gardner-Webb University Men's Basketball team's magical 2018-19 season, which ended with an appearance in the NCAA Tournament, a first in men's Division I basketball history.

Directed by Christian Jessup, the film, "The Dancin' Bulldogs," follows GWU's entire journey, from the early wins against NCAA powerhouses to heartbreaking losses, the tournament appearance and coming home after the loss to No. 1 seed

Virginia. The doc features interviews with players, coaches and NCAA officials, and never-before-released footage of the team's championship run.

Jessup, a 2018 alumnus, made his directorial debut with this 80-minute film that began as a short tribute. He got the idea for the documentary from watching ESPN's "The Last Dance," a documentary series that followed Michael Jordan's NBA finals run. Jessup compared the feelings he had watching the series to those he had while witnessing Gardner-Webb win the Big South Championship and earn an automatic bid to the NCAA tournament.

He texted his friend, GWU student Thomas Manning, asking if he would help. Manning, a member of the North Carolina Film Critics'

Association, was on the ESPN Plus camera crew that filmed the men's basketball team that year.

Manning agreed, and the two enlisted the help of Eli Hardin and Brendan Boylan, also 2018 alumni. "Eli was the fact checker," Jessup said. "He is a stats guy and keeps up with the news articles. Brendan was a producer and helped call some game shots and provided some much-needed commentary."

Jessup, who doubled majored in music composition, and film and video at Gardner-Webb, wrote and performed the film's music. He has composed music for film and visual media since 2016 and interned in 2017 with Hans Zimmer (*Pirates of the Caribbean*, *The Lion King*, *Dark Knight Trilogy*). He also writes music for video and audio-based projects for VisionPoint Marketing.

Jessup began by searching online for anything related to the Bulldogs' season. Based on the footage, he created an outline and scheduled interviews with key individuals. One reason he and Manning had access to people was because of COVID-19 restrictions at the time. "Everyone was at home over that summer," Jessup informed. "The Big South commissioner (Kyle Kallander), Chris Holtman, the former head basketball coach, who is now head coach at Ohio State, and Jason Williford, Virginia's associate head coach. A lot of people we might not normally be able to interview, we were able to get in touch with and hold Zoom interviews."

Manning noted that everyone he interviewed was happy to talk about the men's basketball team's accomplishment. "The Virginia associate head coach (Williford)—we spoke to him for 15 minutes," Manning related. "He was extremely complimentary of Gardner-Webb, and the fight they put up in the NCAA tournament game against Virginia, who went on to win the National Championship that year."

While finishing the documentary and feeling good about the content, Manning and Jessup received a last-minute email that took the film to the next level. Ryan Bridges (former GWU director of Sports Information) offered them 150 gigabytes of never-before-seen footage made by Eric Mangum (former director of new media relations). "It was a huge help from GWU," Jessup stated. "That was a game-changer in terms of the angles and the shots we could include. Some of the quotes in that footage we never thought we'd find."

Jessup and Manning were excited for people to see the film and grateful for the support they received in its making upon the official release in October 2020. "The evolution of this project—starting as an idea for a 5-minute video tribute on YouTube, eventually resulting in an award-winning feature-length documentary selected to multiple film festivals—taught me that if you have the time, energy, and passion for something special, then just go for it," Manning concluded. "The four of us dedicated a ton of emotional energy into this journey, but I think we would all agree that it was 100 percent worth every minute."

Jessup added, "I hope by reliving those moments, people watching it will be proud of Gardner-Webb and what they accomplished."

The documentary has gone on to be recognized by organizations and film festivals.

North Carolina Film Critics Association

Awards: The Dancin' Bulldogs was nominated in December 2020 for the Ken Hanke Memorial Tar Heel Award, recognizing a film or person with a special tie to North Carolina.

Indie Eye Film Awards: A monthly film awards show, with the monthly winners entered into a yearly competition. The Dancin' Bulldogs won "Best Documentary" and "Best Original Music/Song/Score" in May 2021.

North Carolina Film Festival: The Dancin' Bulldogs was nominated for the 2021 North Carolina Film Festival. The film was screened at the festival in June 2021, and the documentary team (Christian Jessup, Thomas Manning, Eli Hardin, Brendan Boylan) won the "Best Filmmakers" for the festival.

Triumphant Film Series: The Dancin' Bulldogs was named "Most Inspirational Film" for the 2021 Triumphant Film Series presented by the Raleigh Film and Art Festival, a film festival created to promote "love, peace, laughter, and the triumph of the human spirit, juried by industry insiders." The festival took place in October 2021.

More information on the Dancin' Bulldogs can be found online:

dancinbulldogsmovie.weebly.com



Eli Hardin



Brendan Boylan



From left, Matt Skeen, '07, Head Football Coach Tre Lamb and Avery Harper, '07

Making Real Change

GREY Foundation Supports Equality through Education and Professional Development

Team spirit is built inside the locker room, where everyone is equal and valued. A bond is created that lasts a lifetime. Matt Skeen, a 2007 alumnus of Gardner-Webb University, values those relationships and keeps in touch with his teammates around the Charlotte, N.C., area and beyond. When the nation witnessed the death of George Floyd and the subsequent civil unrest, Skeen turned to his teammate, Avery Harper, '07, for answers. Just like when they played football together, they could discuss difficult topics.

"It's all about dialogue and perspective," Skeen observed. "Without those conversations, everyone goes back to 'assume'—you assume someone is racist or you assume that someone has a specific point of view, without knowing the whole picture."

Skeen shared with Harper that his idea was to develop an anti-racism brand and base everything on the grey color scheme—wristbands, bumper stickers, T-shirts.

Harper pointed out that while he knew Skeen's motive was to make a difference, others might think he was trying to make a dollar off of a negative situation. "Avery

and I started talking and we asked, 'Are we trying to sell wristbands or are we trying to make real change?'" Skeen stated. "And we decided to go the route of let's make real change and impact people."

They asked other GWU football alumni and a mutual friend to join the effort. In the midst of a pandemic, the group started the GREY Foundation, a non-profit organization in Charlotte. The mission is simple: "To promote unity in communities by advocating for equality through education and professional development."

Skeen, practice administrator at OrthoCarolina in Gastonia, N.C., became the founder and president, and Harper is the vice president. Joining them are Chris James, '11 and '14, education chair; Jeff Leard, '06, secretary; Stephen Knorr, '06, treasurer; George Pressley, '05 and '07, mentor co-chair; and Thomas Trudeau, '07, business development.

Board members raised \$15,000 through donations and selling T-shirts and wristbands. GWU Head Football Coach Tre Lamb supported the effort, buying T-shirts for the team.

The GREY Foundation's first project was to purchase 300 covers for Chromebooks and similar devices for students at two schools in the Charlotte area. Protecting these devices is important for underprivileged students, because they don't have money for repairs. Waiting on the school to repair them can take months. The group also coordinated tutoring sessions for Charlotte-Mecklenburg students and provided a professional development workshop for the seniors on the GWU football team.

Lamb was impressed with the presentation by Skeen and the others. "This was the most powerful players' association event I have ever seen and I can't wait to see what this grows into," he praised. "We had alumni fly in from as far away as San Diego and Indianapolis – and drive in from all over the southeast to be here and to pour into our players."

To find out how you can partner with the GREY Foundation, email contact@greyfoundation.org or visit: <https://www.greyfoundation.org/>

IN MEMORIAM

1950s

LINDA MARIE GREENE LINDSEY '65

passed away on March 15, 2021, in Fuquay-Varina, N.C. Born in Shelby, N.C., she graduated from Shelby High School and received an associate degree from Gardner-Webb. She devoted her life to being a mom and raising her kids and loved being a grand mommy. She kept a prayer journal where every day, she would pray over more than 400 names given to her over the years. She was in a car wreck at the age of 21 that kept her in the hospital for more than a year. Her parents were told that she would not make it, and if she did, she would never walk. But Lindsey was a fighter. She would run a 10K every day, and she completed several marathons. In the mid-80s, she was the only female salesperson at the Chevrolet dealership in Plymouth, N.C., leading in sales month after month. She served as a youth leader in her Presbyterian Church in Lowell, N.C., Church of the Nazarene in Plymouth, and Harvest Church in Washington, N.C. She was a vice president and president for The Junior Women's League in Gastonia, N.C.

MR. O.G. MOREHEAD JR., '51

passed away at age 90 at his home in Summerville, Ga., on March 16, 2021, following a brief illness. A native of Gastonia, N.C., Morehead graduated from Summerville High School, was a Distinguished Graduate of Gardner-Webb College in Boiling Springs, and received his master's degree from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. He served in the U. S. Navy, with the U. S. Marines, during the Korean Conflict and received two Purple Hearts during his combat service, and was active in the Rome Marines. Morehead was a charter member

of Horizon Baptist Fellowship serving as deacon, choir member, and Sunday school teacher. For several years, he served as city councilman for the City of Summerville and was an active member of the Recreation Board for many years. He was a member of the Summerville-Trion Rotary Club. For some 20 years, Morehead was plant superintendent for Bigelow Mill.

RICHARD E. PLYLER, '55

passed away April 2, 2021. He was in the class of 1955 at Gardner-Webb and graduated from Carson Newman College and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He was ordained to the ministry by Temple Baptist Church in Gastonia, N.C. During his ministry he served as pastor of Wise Baptist Church, Wise, Va.; Mount Beulah Baptist Church, Bessemer City, N.C., and Patterson Grove Baptist Church, Kings Mountain, N.C., from which he retired in 1994 after 31 years as pastor. Plyler remained active in the life of Gardner-Webb and was named to the Gallery of Distinguished Alumni in 2008. He always appreciated the contribution his time as a student at Gardner-Webb made to the development of his Christian life. He is survived by his wife, two sons, a daughter and four granddaughters.

DR. HELEN MARIE STINSON, '54

died July 26, 2021, while at Authoracare Hospice (Beacon Place) in Greensboro, N.C. She was born in Chatham County, N.C. and grew up in Ramseur, N.C. where she gained a love of gardening and flowers. After high school, she graduated from Gardner-Webb in 1954 and obtained her teaching degree at Appalachian State University. She taught sign language at the School for the Deaf in Morganton, N.C. She then decided to study to be a

doctor and graduated from Wake Forest University with a pre-med degree and then graduated from medical school at the University of Tennessee. In 1972, Stinson opened her office in Greensboro where she practiced cosmetic and reconstructive surgery for 25 years. She often did charity medical work for little or no pay. In the early 1980s, she joined the Army Reserve Medical Corps. In 1991, she went to Kuwait in Operation Desert Storm. She attained the rank of full Colonel and retired from the reserves after 14 years of service. She was an active member of First Baptist Church in Greensboro for many years.

1999

MELISSA BROWNING, '99

passed away April 8, 2021, in Tucker, Ga. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Religious Studies with a minor in African Studies from Gardner-Webb in 1999, and was named a Distinguished Alumni and Alumna of the Year in 2017. Browning graduated magna cum laude with her Master of Divinity from Baylor University in 2002, and in 2011, she earned her Ph.D. in Christian Ethics from Loyola University Chicago. An ordained Baptist minister, she began her ministry as field personnel with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Following her doctoral studies, she worked as a professor to inspire, equip, and empower seminary students at Loyola University, McAfee School of Theology, and Columbia Theological Seminary. A passionate defender of justice and equality, Browning lived out these ideals in her activism for women with HIV in Tanzania, in anti-death penalty work in Georgia, and serving as a consultant, trainer, and on the board of the Asset-Based Community Development Institute.

Dr. Bob Lamb, 91, Dean Emeritus of the School of Divinity, Leaves Behind Legacy

Lamb's Career in Education and the Ministry Spanned Over Seven Decades

BY KATHRYN MANNING

Dr. Robert “Bob” Lamb, dean emeritus of the M. Christopher White School of Divinity, passed away on Oct. 19, 2021.

“While we are all deeply saddened by Dr. Lamb’s passing, we draw strength from knowing that his half-century association with Gardner-Webb has produced an indelible legacy,” reflected Gardner-Webb President Dr. William Downs. “Indeed, he is one of those giants on whose shoulders our institution now stands. Professor, Chair, Dean, and a dedicated servant-leader...Dr. Lamb did it all. For that and more, our University family looks with gratitude to a life well lived.”

Lamb had a prolific career serving in education and ministry. Even under hospice care, at the age of 91, he conducted Bible studies with residents in the long-term care facility and his most fervent wish had been to remain “useful” for as long as the Lord allowed.

“Dr. Lamb truly was a Renaissance man,” observed Tracy C. Jessup, vice president for Christian Life and Service and senior minister to the University. “He was remarkably gifted, not only as a Christian educator in the university and the church, but also as a pastor, musician, and administrator. His love for and devotion to his family and his students was surpassed only by his love for and devotion to the Gospel of Jesus Christ,” Jessup added.

Lamb graduated from Stephen F. Austin State University (B.A.), and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (M.A. and Ph.D.). He also completed additional study at the Westminster Choir College, Baylor University, North Carolina State University, Appalachian State University, and Boston College.



In his mid-20s, Lamb moved to Kaiserslautern, Germany, where he worked as civilian director of Christian education at Vogelweh Army Chapel. While there, Lamb also led in organizing one of the first post-World War II English-speaking Baptist churches for Americans—the Kaiserslautern Baptist Church, American.

In 1962, Lamb came to teach Speech and Remedial English at Gardner-Webb with the understanding that he could help establish a religion department. After one year at the College, Lamb became professor of religious education and religion. He assisted in creating a large department with a strong Religious Education concentration. He was also instrumental in the college’s transition to senior college status in 1971.

Lamb was involved in planning a Fall Revival and Spring Emphasis Week, and also helped to create Dimensions, a new approach to weekly Chapel. In addition,

Lamb served as chair of the Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy, and along with other faculty, led the school’s first freshman experience course. Lamb worked with three of the Southern Baptist seminaries to better integrate the undergraduate and graduate programs. During this time, he helped to establish a master’s program in Christian education. This eventually led to the development and opening of the M. Christopher White School of Divinity in 1993, with Lamb serving as the founding dean.

He served in numerous churches throughout his career in Texas and in the Carolinas in positions ranging from education and music minister to interim pastor. Lamb also spent time as a missionary and teacher in places like South Africa, Africa, and the Philippines. He also founded a school for pastors in Belize and had served as executive director for the Fellowship of Baptist Educators.

Gardner-Webb's Dr. Dee Hunt Passes Away

Alumni, Faculty and Staff Remember the Life of Long-time Mentor and Colleague

Gardner-Webb University said goodbye to a legendary leader of the campus community. Dr. Dee Hunt passed away on July 8, 2021, after a courageous battle with an extended illness. During her nearly 40 years of service at GWU, she was a professor, coach, administrator, dean, department chair and community advocate.

"Dee Hunt has been a towering figure at Gardner-Webb for decades," noted Gardner-Webb President Dr. William Downs. "Her fingerprints are all over the University's success. Dr. Hunt left an indelible impression on anyone who met her ... fiercely determined, unfiltered, and always caring. Above all else was her love for the students. That love will be an enduring legacy, a legacy for which we are all so very grateful."

Hunt joined the GWU faculty in 1978 as associate professor of health education and physical education. She distinguished herself as a coach and consultant in the field of women's athletics, particularly volleyball and softball. She also provided distinguished leadership to the Department of Health, Sport and Physical Education as chair from 1988 to 1995 and again from 1998 to 1999. In 1993, Hunt was awarded the Excellence in Teaching Award from GWU. As the founding dean of the College of Education, Hunt provided innovative and energetic leadership, directing the program's inception and accreditation from 1995-99. Over the years, students gave her the nickname, "Doc Hunt," which was used by many on campus.

Lisa Tucker is a former student-athlete, and was mentored by Hunt while on Gardner-Webb's volleyball team. The two developed a friendship that lasted over three-and-a-half decades. "Our story together started in 1985 and will



continue for the rest of my life," said Tucker. "I tell people that she changed the trajectory of my life, and for that, I will love her forever. She was a master of sculpting students, making them believe in themselves. She worked her magic through selfless acts of kindness and discipline; discipline that was always backed by her love of students and teaching."

Hunt continued to teach physical education until 2010, when she was named vice president of Student Development and dean of students. Moving into the administrative role was a tough decision because she loved interacting with her students in the classroom. In her Student Development role, Hunt met directly with students, parents and family members to create a purposeful and caring campus environment. She also planned and implemented improvements in the Student Development arena.

In 2012, Hunt successfully directed the physical move of the Student Development division into the newly constructed Tucker Student Center,

which she helped plan. The dedication ceremony topped the list as one of Hunt's favorite GWU memories. Longtime GWU supporter Robert Tucker made a surprise \$500,000 gift in honor of Hunt at the event.

Hunt served as vice president of Student Development until she retired in 2017. Reflecting on her 39 years at the University, she described what she hoped would be her legacy at GWU: "That I made a difference," she stated. "That every contact I've had with any kid—no matter how brief or how long or deep or shallow—made them a better person."

One year after her retirement from Gardner-Webb, Hunt became the first faculty member to receive three emeriti titles. On May 4, 2018, she was honored for her service as a professor emerita of physical education, dean emerita of the College of Education and vice president emerita of Student Development.

In November 2020, Gardner-Webb University celebrated the naming of the Dr. Dee M. Hunt Student Development Suite in the Tucker Student Center in her honor.

Gardner-Webb School of Education Remembers Friend and Colleague, Dr. Cindy McKinney

Described by her colleagues as an integral part of the School of Education, Dr. Cindy McKinney is being remembered for her Christian spirit and the contributions she made during her 25 years at Gardner-Webb University. McKinney, a native of Rutherford County, N.C., passed away on April 26, 2021.

McKinney was a retired professor and coordinator of Elementary Education and director of Student Teaching and Field Experiences. She was also a graduate of Gardner-Webb, receiving her Bachelor of Science Degree in Early Childhood Education in 1986 and her Master of Arts Degree in Early Childhood Education in 1989. As an undergraduate, she received an honors scholarship to attend Gardner-Webb. As a student, she was named to “Who’s Who” and earned recognition on the dean’s list. She also received the Student Teacher of the Year Award.

Dr. Lane Wesson, professor and coordinator of Elementary Education and director of Clinical Experiences, worked with McKinney for 17 years. “Dr. McKinney was very protective of her students and did everything that she could to make sure they had all the resources they needed to be successful,” Wesson reflected. “It is my understanding that she oftentimes kept up with candidates after they graduated and started a new chapter of their lives. She had a heart full of love, compassion, and grace. I will miss her.”

Before coming to Gardner-Webb in 1992, McKinney taught third grade in the Rutherford County (N.C.) School System for six years. In 1997, she graduated with a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from Clemson (S.C.) University.

She received the Gardner-Webb Excellence in Teaching Award in 2004, and in 2009, she was honored as a Distinguished Alumna of Gardner-Webb.



She also received the Faculty Community Engagement Award from Gardner-Webb in 2013 for the various ways she served the community. She volunteered with such groups as the Ruby Hunt YMCA in Boiling Springs and Cleveland County CORE, an organization that focuses on closing the achievement gap for students. She was also a leader in a female forum initiative to create informal mentoring sessions with students at middle and secondary school levels.

Her friend and former colleague, Dr. Anita Sanders, assistant professor of education, said through all her friend’s accomplishments, McKinney’s Christian spirit was evident. “Her Christian compassion and kindness were exemplified in all of her works whether professional or personal,” Sanders affirmed. “In every action of her life, the Lord guided her path and revealed

her anointed spirit. Whereas, death has invaded our ranks and removed from the walks of life our beloved former colleague, Dr. Cindy McKinney, her soul has departed to walk amongst the angels. On a personal note, there is no doubt that she has already requested a conference with Jesus.”

Moreover, Sanders said everyone who knew McKinney would forever treasure and remember her many sacrifices in helping others. “The great scholar and poet, Dr. Maya Angelou, sums up Dr. McKinney’s life best in her poem, Phenomenal Woman,” Sanders observed. “Now you understand just why her head was not bowed. She didn’t shout or jump about or have to talk really loud. When you saw her passing, it ought to have made you proud. It was in the click of her heels, the bend of her hair, the palm of her hand, the need for her care. ‘Cause she was a woman phenomenally.”

Dr. Sharon Creed-Hall was ‘A Shining Light’ in the Hunt School of Nursing



Dr. Sharon Creed-Hall, assistant professor in nursing and simulation coordinator, passed away Feb. 22, 2021, from complications due to COVID-19.

She received her ADN from Patrick Henry Community College, her BSN from Gardner-Webb University, her MSN from Indiana Wesleyan University and her DNP from Gardner-Webb.

Creed-Hall was an integral part of the Hunt School of Nursing (HSON) family for a decade. She led her students with a joy and passion that is unmatched. She was always available to students, going above and beyond what was required of her. She progressed the simulation labs with

her enthusiasm for training future nurses in a hands-on setting. She was a member of the Society for Simulation in Healthcare, International Nursing Association for Clinical Simulation and Learning (INASL) and North Carolina Nursing Association.

Members of the HSON faculty collaborated to share the following thoughts about their friend and colleague. “Sharon was the definition of a ‘shining light’—she was always smiling, laughing, and leading our students toward Christ. She had a great deal of enthusiasm and passion for the success of our simulation lab experiences. The lab is the place where students can learn, receive feedback, and improve their nursing care in

preparation for the clinical setting. It was Sharon’s desire for all students to be compassionate, caring, and courageous. Her legacy is evident in all of the nurses she trained and touched. This is not only a loss for the HSON, but for Gardner-Webb University, and the nursing profession as a whole.”

Dr. Nicole Waters, associate provost for the College of Health Sciences, said Creed-Hall possessed and displayed the core values of caring, integrity, and excellence in her role daily. Waters also noted that the sign by Creed-Hall’s office door reflected her heart: “Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Romans 12:1-2)

“We all have received her support, unconditional love, and prayers; our lives are better because we knew and journeyed life alongside her,” she asserted. “She encouraged others to look at the little things and to do all that they could to help as many as possible with the abilities God had given them. Her servant heart, joyous personality, infectious smile, and love for the Lord will forever be stamped on the Hunt School of Nursing. May God be the Glory for Her Joy Story!”

Creed-Hall’s family established the Dr. Sharon Creed-Hall Hunt School of Nursing Memorial Scholarship at GWU. Donations can be mailed directly to Office of Advancement, PO Box 997, Boiling Springs NC 28017 ATTN: Dr. Hall Scholarship.



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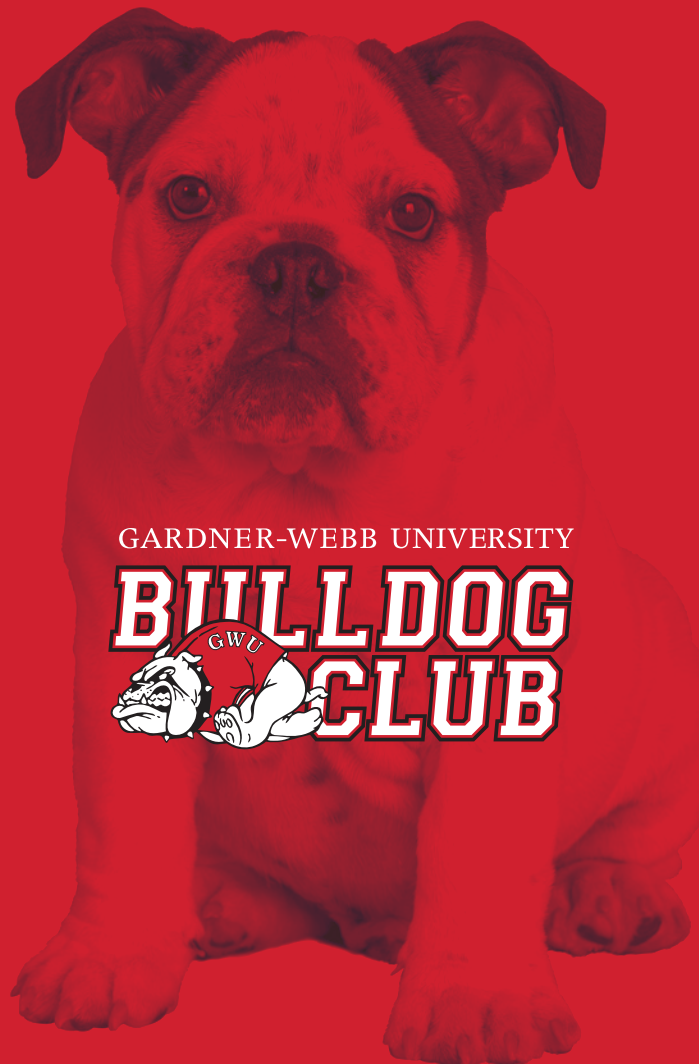
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Each year, nearly 600 student-athletes choose to attend Gardner-Webb University where they can develop academically while playing NCAA Division I sports. More than half of them receive a full or partial scholarship, but unfortunately, not all receive this support.

One way to grow scholarship support for our student athletes is through Bulldog Club membership. This membership provides scholarship support for GWU Athletics. As a thank you, Bulldog Club members receive special seating, ticket discounts and other access.

**For more information on the Bulldog Club
visit gardner-webb.edu/bulldog-club**



NCAA DIVISION I
INTERCOLLEGIATE SPORTS

022

STUDENT ATHLETES

594

STUDENT ATHLETES ON FULL
ATHLETIC SCHOLARSHIPS

063