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Indiana Native Retires to Cleveland County and Serves Community in Several Capacities



Rod Clouse, right, was a fan of Gardner-Webb University athletics and also supported the University's academic programs. He was chair of the Godbold School of Business Board of Advisors and a member of the GWU Board of Trustees.

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Gardner-Webb University is remembering a friend and faithful supporter, Rod Clouse, who passed away Saturday, June 27. He was current chair of the Godbold School of Business Board of Advisors, and also a member of the GWU Board of Trustees.

A native of Indiana, Clouse and his wife, a Boiling Springs native, retired to Cleveland County, N.C., in 2010. His association with Gardner-Webb began as a sports fan eager to immerse himself in his new community. Fellow church members introduced him to GWU athletics, and in 2012, he joined the Bulldog Club.

“We are all deeply saddened by Rod Clouse’s sudden passing,” shared GWU President Dr. William M. Downs. “Rod was an active and dedicated member of Gardner-Webb’s Board of Trustees, and he was a passionate supporter of Bulldog athletics. Always ready with a thoughtful suggestion or a word of encouragement, Rod was a true asset to our campus community. I will remember him with both gratitude and respect.”

From his interest in sports, Clouse’s affinity for the University extended beyond the field of play to its strong academics and emphasis on service. After a career in national and international manufacturing, Clouse felt drawn to GWU’s acclaimed Godbold School of Business. The more he learned about the School, the more excited he became about supporting it. In 2014, he agreed to serve on the School’s Board of Advisors.

Mischia Taylor, School of Business dean and instructor of marketing, appreciated Clouse’s support and his vast professional experience. “When I began as dean, he was quick to reach out and offer his assistance,” she related. “He was a great mentor to me and served everyone in our department. He was a wonderful man, who always attended events and supported our students. My favorite memories will be our lunch trips to chat over all things GWU, but we always took time to just catch up with life.”

Clouse spent his career with Parker Hannifin Corporation, which specializes in manufacturing motion and control technologies and systems. In 2016, he was featured in Gardner-Webb, The Magazine. In the article, Clouse reflected on his time with the company. As a manager, he worked with alumni of GWU’s business programs and took note of their curiosity and professionalism. “Gardner-Webb is a great, classic liberal arts institution with first-class facilities,” he said in the story. “I’m impressed with the people associated with it, including the speakers who come to campus. I think it’s a fantastic school.”

Jennifer Marion Mills, president of the GWU Board of Trustees, also praised Clouse’s character and his service to the University. “Rod Clouse was a great person and an avid supporter of Gardner-Webb,” she affirmed. “Rod provided significant leadership on the Board of Trustees, where he served on both the Development Committee and the Marketing Committee. Rod had a servant’s heart and was truly an advocate for Gardner-Webb University. Rod’s contributions will be missed not only by the Board, but the entire University. I know I share every Board member’s sadness. Rod will be greatly missed.”

Clouse graduated from Ball State University in Muncie, Ind., with a double major in sociology and political science. He considered a career in law and did a stint as a teacher of American history. Then, an opportunity came that transformed his career plans: the offer of a ground-floor engineer's position with a Detroit-based company. Clouse took it. Though he had no formal engineering training, he found—much to his surprise—that he had an aptitude for engineering design and sales.

Clouse joined Parker, where he became a go-to manager who helped revive struggling plants by boosting employee morale and streamlining work processes. In 1992, he moved to the South for the first time, becoming a manager at Parker's Forest City (N.C.) plant. He met his wife, Freida Ledbetter Hamrick, and they wed in 1994.

In 2000, Parker asked Clouse to move to London, England, to serve as president of operations for the hydraulic groups. While there, he and Freida bought a home in Boiling Springs to have a place close to her family. In 2010, Parker tapped Clouse for another step up—to the company's European headquarters in Switzerland. He and Freida weighed the offer, but in the end decided to settle in North Carolina.

Clouse embraced the Cleveland County community with his characteristic curiosity and energy. He bought the Roundup store in Shelby from longtime GWU friend and benefactor Dr. Jack Hunt. He also owned the Affinity Salon and Spa in Shelby. He served on the Habitat for Humanity board, the Cleveland County Arts Council Board, the Cleveland Community College Foundation Board and was a Guardian ad Litem—a court-appointed advocate to represent the best interests of foster children.



Rod Clouse

Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university. Gardner-Webb emphasizes a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics to prepare students to become effective leaders within the global community. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.