

Gardner-Webb University

Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University

Gardner-Webb NewsCenter Archive

Gardner-Webb Publications

6-8-2020

Gardner-Webb Physician Assistant (PA) Studies Program Adjusts Traditional Ceremony

Office of University Communications

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/gardner-webb-newscenter-archive>

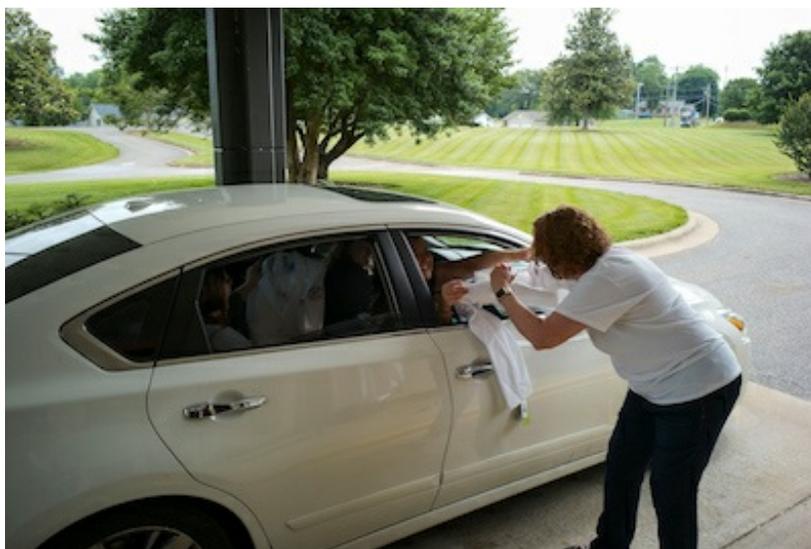
Gardner-Webb Physician Assistant (PA) Studies Program Adjusts Traditional Ceremony

webpublish.gardner-webb.edu/newscenter/pa-adjusts-white-coat-event-for-covid-19/

Office of University
Communications

June 8, 2020

Class of 2021 Receives White Coats in Drive-Through Celebration



BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—The Gardner-Webb University Physician Assistant (PA) Studies Program wasn't going to let the Coronavirus Pandemic prevent the Class of 2021 from observing an important milestone in their academic journey. The traditional White Coat Ceremony is held every year to recognize when PA students complete their classroom component and transition to the clinical environment.

Usually held in Tucker Student Center with friends and family, this year's recognition had to incorporate Covid-19 social-distancing guidelines. Spearheaded by Alli Qualls, PA admissions coordinator and assistant to the program director, the White Coat event became a drive-through celebration. The PA students arrived in their cars and stopped at various stations to pick up their white coats and other supplies. The GWU Bulldog Mascot, Mack, attended and cheered for the students. There are 34 students in the class, and 23 attended the recent event.

In addition to their White Coats, the students also received Gardner-Webb face masks, PA program T-shirts, a copy of the PA Oath, and clinical documentation forms. They also received a Clinical Survival Kit, which held small reminders to encourage them, such as a rubber band to remind them to be flexible and a pen light so they can "go out and shine."

“We are proud of this moment every year,” noted Ami Steele, associate professor, chair and PA program director. “This class has undoubtedly faced more significant barriers to get to this point in their education, and they deserve to be celebrated for their drive and stamina. A few parts of the PA Oath come to mind when we think of sending our students out. In light of the current state of affairs in our nation, we ask our students to commit to embracing caring for the health, safety, welfare, and dignity of all human beings. We hope they recognize and promote the value of diversity and seek to treat equally all persons who seek care. We hope they will approach every opportunity with eagerness to learn, and compassion to see far beyond the diagnosis and treat the patient as a whole.”



The students are assigned to several sites across North Carolina and the nation as the PA program tries to balance availability of sites and students' current locations. “We had to restructure our clinical curriculum to allow for opportunities to become available later in the summer than we usually target for them to begin their experiential learning,” Steele observed. “We used the opportunity to make much-needed changes to our schedule for rotations, and to add a course focused on all aspects of Evidence-Based Practice. Right now, we are placing students in primary care practices, while we wait for our larger healthcare organization partners to allow students to return to train with them. Without their support of our students and investment in training the next generation, we would face an impossible task. Many hospital systems like CaroMont, Atrium, and Novant are beginning to schedule students once again, but with new guidelines to protect both students and patients.”

As the nation continues to face a shortage of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), the Gardner-Webb PA program had to search to provide these items for students. “Some fields of medicine have not yet allowed students to return out of concern for their safety,” Steele

stated. “We will continue to work to provide all the necessary experiences for our students and to meet all accreditation requirements while using technology and simulation to supplement them.”

Steele concluded, “One of our greatest desires is to support our students fully and to tangibly partner with them as they spread their wings, especially in the face of the pandemic. We are confident they are well on their way to being 34 fantastic providers.”

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.

