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### **Gardner-Webb University Inducts Seven into Gallery of Distinguished Alumni**

Office of University Communications

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# Gardner-Webb University Inducts Seven into Gallery of Distinguished Alumni

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Office of University  
Communications

October 15, 2019

## *Honorees Recognized for Professional Accomplishments and Service in Their Communities*

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Gardner-Webb honored outstanding members of the University family with induction into the GWU Gallery of Distinguished Alumni during 2019 Homecoming activities Oct. 11-12. Seven alumni were recognized as new members of the prestigious gallery, including Susan Bolt Briggs, of Gastonia, N.C., Porsha Russell, of Charlotte, N.C., Dr. Michelle Skipper, of St. Pauls, N.C., Mark Edward Smith, of Marvin, N.C., Dr. Manny Trujillo, of Spartanburg, S.C., Keon Williams Jr., of Charlotte, N.C., and Archie Wood, of Yadkinville, N.C.



Susan Briggs

### **Susan Briggs**

—Retired from the banking industry after 37 years of service, Briggs held the position of Market President for BB&T, managing Gaston, Cleveland and Lincoln counties. She had various leadership responsibilities within the bank as well as the communities she supported. Past community work includes co-chair of United Way, Hospice of Gaston Capital Campaign, and serving on various boards including Gaston Community Foundation, Gaston Chamber of Commerce, Gaston Together, Daniel Stowe Botanical Garden/ Visitors, Gaston County Sports Hall of Fame and Gastonia Rotary East. Since retiring in 2018, she has continued to enjoy being involved in community works, church and Gardner Webb University. She serves as a member of the GWU Board of Trustees and

Chairman of the Administrative Affairs Committee. She obtained her bachelor's in business administration from Gardner-Webb in 1981 and attended two years at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge for graduate school of banking.

## **Porsha Russell**

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—Whether being crowned Shelby High School's homecoming queen; leading Gardner-Webb's cheerleaders; ministering to youth through performance dance and mentorship at Changers Church International under Pastor Rickey McCluney; or providing for kids through Cleveland County's educational and social services, Russell's passion has always been serving people, particularly children who cannot advocate for themselves. A 2009 graduate of Gardner-Webb, Russell works with Mecklenburg's Youth & Family Services. She has trained and counseled numerous social workers, public servants, and families, via organizations such as SAYSO and Guardian Ad-Litem. She regularly volunteers with food banks, shelters, and has participated in a bevy of charity fundraising events. Porsha has also served children participating in the Special Olympics, and in 2015, was honored as Mecklenburg County's Social Worker of the Year.



Porsha Russell



Dr. Michelle Skipper

## **Dr. Michelle Skipper**

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—Inspired by her rural North Carolina roots, Skipper has pursued quality health care for all, whether in her home community or in Nicaragua. She believes that nurse practitioners can transform the health of communities and educates nurse practitioners to become quality clinicians and local leaders. Over her 28-year career, she has progressed from a night-shift nurse in the newborn nursery to director of the adult-gerontology and family nurse practitioner specialties of the DNP program at East Carolina University (Greenville, N.C.). She and her husband also supported those with medical needs during the aftermath of Hurricanes Matthew and Florence, getting food, medication and supplies to those who were homebound and could not make it to safe shelter. She was recognized by the town of St. Pauls and by the North Carolina Office of State Human Resources for her compassionate work. She was inducted as a Fellow in the American Association of Nurse Practitioners in the summer of 2019. She received her Doctor of Nursing Practice from GWU in 2013.



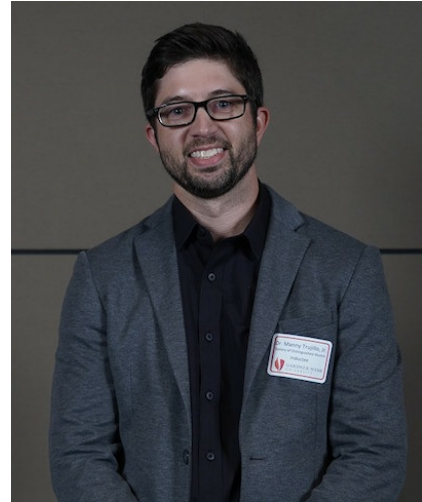
Mark Smith

## **Mark Smith**

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—A four-year starter on the inaugural soccer team at Gardner-Webb, Smith received a bachelor's degree in administrative management in 1991. After graduation, he earned a master's degree in sports management from the United States Sports Academy, graduating with honors in 1992. He began his career with the Charlotte Checkers as an original staff member. Following his tenure with the Checkers, he worked in the sales and marketing department at Charlotte Motor Speedway. Currently vice president of marketing for the Charlotte Knights baseball team, Smith was part of the team's transition from South

Carolina to uptown Charlotte and the BB&T Ballpark. Through his leadership, the Knights have led all 160 Minor League Baseball teams in attendance with 145 sellouts averaging over 9,100 fans per game for the past six seasons.

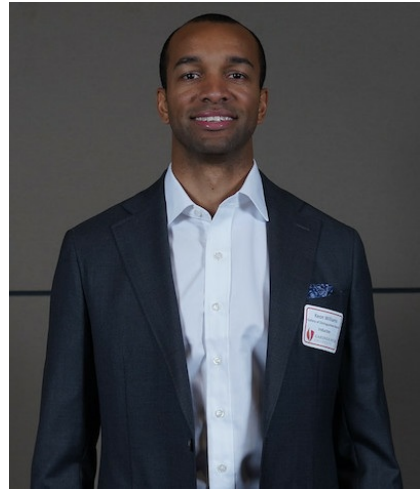


Dr. Manny Trujillo

### **Dr. Manny Trujillo**

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—After graduating magna cum laude from Gardner-Webb with bachelor’s degrees in chemistry and biology, Trujillo obtained his medical degree from the Medical College of Georgia (Augusta) and completed a rigorous six-year training program in general surgery at Spartanburg Regional Medical Center. During his residency, he discovered his passion for plastic and reconstructive surgery. He performed another three years of specialized training in plastic and reconstructive surgery at Emory University (Atlanta, Ga.), where he focused on the fields of reconstructive microsurgery and supermicrosurgery, which involve transplanting tissue from one area of the body to another and using a microscope to suture blood vessels together less than 1 mm in diameter. After obtaining his training, Trujillo returned to Spartanburg Regional Medical Center. He routinely performs complex microsurgical transplant procedures to restore the form and function of patients who have suffered deformities caused by trauma and cancer. He serves as an assistant professor at Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) Area Health Education Center (AHEC) in Charleston, S.C. Trujillo also founded and is the program director of a microsurgical training program offered to plastic surgeons seeking to learn this skill. The program will see its first trainee in the fall of 2020.



Keon Williams Jr.

### **Keon Williams Jr.**

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—Williams works in municipal finance on the capital markets trading floor at Wells Fargo in Charlotte, where he is one of the youngest African American professionals. He is involved with mentoring local college students and serving the homeless and less fortunate. Particularly, Williams credits Gardner-Webb for helping him understand that faith and business are not mutually exclusive. He is on the board of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes Metro-Carolina and the Young Professional Council of the Levine Museum of the New South. He has recently created his own 501c3 non-profit called Play Fresh Inc., where he is utilizing the power of football to educate middle school students on composting, recycling, and sustainability. Play Fresh hosted their inaugural football camp for the Cleveland County community at Gardner-Webb this past July, which was led by 20 former Gardner-Webb football players. He graduated from GWU in 2014 with a Bachelor of Science degree in economics/finance and a minor in French.

### **Archie Wood**

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—With over 25 years of experience in the fuel supply and distribution industry, Wood is regarded as an industry leader and actively participates as a subject matter expert within industry associations. As a Certified Transportation Professional, Wood currently sits on the National Private Truck Council's National Advisory Board, Safety Committee, and is a past member of the Board of Directors for North Carolina Trucking Association. He is currently employed as Manager – Transport Operations for Speedway LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Marathon Petroleum Company – a leading energy company and the largest U.S. refiner along with midstream and retail operations. He obtained his Bachelor of Science in business administration in 1993.

*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.*



Archie Wood