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Office of University
Communications

August 4, 2019

Students from Traditional Undergraduate, Degree Completion, and Graduate Programs Honored



BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Gardner–Webb University hosted Summer Commencement on Saturday, Aug. 3, in the Lutz-Yelton Convocation Center at 10 a.m. Nearly 200 traditional undergraduate, degree completion, and graduate program students were honored for their achievements during the ceremony. Dr. William M. Downs, Gardner-Webb’s new president, presided over his first commencement ceremony.

Many graduates participated in the ceremony through prayer and scripture readings. Austin Childress (Mocksville, N.C.), who earned a Bachelor of Arts in Discipleship Studies, offered the invocation. Monique L. Richardson (Hickory, N.C.), who earned a Bachelor of Science in Human Services/Criminal Justice, shared a passage from the Old Testament; and Taylor Jennifer Jackson (Columbus, N.C.), who earned a Master of Arts in English, provided the New Testament Reading.

Awards were also given to those who achieved scholastic excellence. Lori Ann Miller (Taylorsville, N.C.), who earned a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice/Human Services, received the Academic Award from GOAL – The Degree Completion Program.

Savannah Blake Hollifield (Forest City, N.C.) earned a Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science and was presented the Senior Scholastic Achievement Award.

Dr. Eddie Stepp, professor of religion, director of the Accelerated Pastoral Ministries Program and the Honors Experience, provided the commencement message, which was titled, “Gratitude in the Rearview Mirror.” Stepp recalled how when he was a boy, he often traveled in the rear-facing seat of the family station wagon. He used the analogy to encourage graduates to evaluate their educational journey.

“You’ve been working on this degree for a while—some of you longer than you care to admit,” Stepp offered. “So a day of celebration is in order. But so too, time for dreaming and evaluating and reflecting. I want you to join me in the rear-facing seat and think for a moment about where you have been. Graduates, you may walk across the stage by yourself in a few moments, but proper perspective out the back window should remind you that your walk is supported by a host of others. Looking back properly results in gratitude and gratitude should be expressed.”

Stepp further pointed out that God is near throughout the journey. “God’s faithful presence makes the view from the front seat full of goodness and hope and joy,” he concluded. “Meanwhile if we take a look in the rear-view mirror, we will see that God is a steadfast presence who is with you and for you every mile of your great adventure. That is cause for gratitude.”



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.