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Office of University
Communications

October 19, 2018

GWU President Receives North Carolina's Highest Civilian Honor

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—In a surprise presentation at Gardner-Webb University on Oct. 19, GWU President Dr. Frank Bonner was awarded The Order of the Long Leaf Pine—North Carolina's highest civilian honor. Conferred by Gov. Roy Cooper, this prestigious award recognizes exemplary service that has made a significant impact and strengthened the state.

A. Hope Williams, president of North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities, presented the Order of the Long Leaf Pine to GWU President Dr. Frank Bonner in a surprise ceremony Oct. 19.

A. Hope Williams, president of North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities, presented the award at a gathering of the GWU Board of Trustees, senior staff and guests. "It was my great honor as a member of the Governor's Education Cabinet, and on behalf of the state of North Carolina, to present the Order of the Long Leaf Pine to Gardner-Webb University President, Dr. Frank Bonner, for his outstanding career in higher education, which exemplifies the impact that innovative leadership can have on a university, faculty, and students," Williams said.

"This is a great recognition for Dr. Bonner," affirmed Ron Beane, vice chair of the GWU Board of Trustees. "Under his leadership, the University has made so much progress, and he's played a great part in making Gardner-Webb what it is today."

Bonner, who is retiring in January 2019, has served the University for more than three decades in total and as president for nearly

Dr. Frank Bonner

14 years. The award presentation took him completely by surprise. "I am overwhelmed and more appreciative than I can possibly say," he reflected. "I am deeply grateful for all those who had a role in planning this event and were here to be a part of this special honor."

He joined Gardner-Webb in 1987 as vice president for Academic Affairs. His role later evolved into vice president for Academic and Student Affairs and then provost and senior vice president. In May, 2005, he was named GWU's 12th president and took office on July 1. A 1969 graduate of Furman University in Greenville, S.C., with a bachelor's degree in English, Bonner earned his master's degree in 1971 from the University of Georgia in Athens and his doctorate from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1977.

Some highlights of his Gardner-Webb tenure include leading the University's largest-ever capital campaign raising \$46 million, receiving gifts to name the Hunt School of Nursing and Godbold School of Business, starting new doctoral programs in education and nursing, launching a Physician Assistant Studies Program, building the 110,000-square-foot Tucker Student Center, purchasing and renovating the former Crawley Hospital for the College of Health Sciences, adding a science lab annex facility and joining the Big South Conference as a full member for athletics. Bonner was also instrumental in developing several programs of academic enhancement and building state-of-the-art athletic facilities.

Among the most sought after and valued awards conferred by the governor of the State of North Carolina, The Order of the Long Leaf Pine is presented to outstanding North Carolinians who have a proven record of service to the state. Established in 1963, television and film personality Andy Griffith and network news legend David Brinkley were the first to be honored with this award.

Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university that prepares students to become critical thinkers, effective leaders and compassionate servants in the global community. Emphasizing a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics, Gardner-Webb ignites learning and service opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.