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12-6-2017

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# Gardner-Webb Alumna Honored by N.C. Governor for Volunteer Efforts After 2016 Hurricane

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Office of University  
Communications

December 6, 2017

## *Dr. Michelle Taylor Skipper '13 Used Nursing Background to Serve Her Neighbors*



Dr. Michelle Taylor Skipper is congratulated by N.C. Gov. Roy Cooper on receiving the Governor's Award for Excellence in Public Service.

Dr. Michelle Taylor Skipper, an alumna of Gardner-Webb University, is a recipient of the Governor's Award for Excellence in Public Service, the highest honor a state employee may receive. She was recognized for helping with relief efforts in St. Pauls, N.C., after flooding caused by Hurricane Matthew in October 2016. Her efforts extended to her neighbors and others who were stranded in town when major roads became impassable.

Skipper earned her Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) at GWU in 2013. She is a clinical associate professor and director of the DNP program in the College of Nursing at East Carolina University (ECU) in Greenville, N.C. She began teaching at ECU in 2006 and became the director of the DNP program in 2015. She is a Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) with nearly 20 years of experience, working primarily in rural family practice and OB-GYN settings in Scotland County, N.C.



Dr. Michelle Skipper prepares to deliver food to people after Hurricane Matthew struck her town in 2016.

While many in her town were without electricity for a week, Skipper's power was restored quickly. As the shelters in town started filling up, the town manager called her husband, Bruce, a United Methodist pastor to help. "My husband is a well-known cook," she explained. "Shelter residents needed food, and food was beginning to thaw in the school cafeterias while the power was out. So we were able to cook the available food on our outdoor grills."

They were part of a team of volunteers who fed approximately 1,500 people a day for seven days until the shelters were consolidated and power was restored throughout town. Many of the people who came to eat were on dialysis, oxygen, or had diabetes and needed special foods and snacks prepared for them. She used her nursing background and training to prepare meals for those with dietary restrictions. She also delivered food during the day and at night took laundry home to wash for the shelter residents.

Skipper's heart for serving others is one reason she chose to attend Gardner-Webb in 2011. "After interviewing with the faculty, my decision was made," she offered. "I wanted to attend a faith-based university where servant leadership is valued. I was also impressed that Gardner-Webb was a front runner in offering the Doctor of Nursing Practice degree in North Carolina."

At Gardner-Webb, she could speak freely about her faith and its impact on her nursing career. "I believe in Matthew 25:40 (caring for 'the least of these') and felt GWU understood my worldview," she shared. "Having faculty who prayed with and for students was so reassuring and valuable."



Dr. Michelle T. Skipper is the director of the Doctor of Nursing Practice program at East Carolina University (ECU).  
(Photo provided by ECU)

Her goal is to educate passionate, wise and caring nurse practitioners who understand the challenges of the citizens of North Carolina. The DNP classes at Gardner-Webb strengthened her leadership and administrative skills, preparing her for the director's position. She also formed meaningful relationships with peers and faculty. "I have three nursing degrees, and felt that my education at GWU was the best experience," Skipper observed, noting she hopes to give her student's a similar experience. "I strive to be accessible to my students, to hear their concerns, and to meet needs whenever I possibly can."