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Kris Pratt '99 Recognized Twice with South Carolina Excellence in Teaching Award

 photo of Kris Pratt with a student

Twice in eight years, Kris Pratt has been awarded the South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities Excellence in Teaching Award. A 1999 graduate of the Gardner-Webb University School of Divinity, Pratt is professor of religion and chair of the Humanities Division at Spartanburg (S.C.) Methodist College. He believes the education he received at GWU is the foundation for his ministry as an educator.

“For me, the School of Divinity at GWU was a life-changing experience,” Pratt related. “I am not sure that I would be doing what I am doing now if not for the school. The professors helped me in ways that I cannot even express. My classmates inspired me with their devotion to the gospel. I remember as I was preparing to graduate how encouraged I felt about the future of the church. GWU was (and is) helping students to be transformed into the image of Christ and preparing students to live the gospel in their ministries.”

A resident of Fletcher, N.C., Pratt earned his Ph.D. in Religion in 2005 from Baylor University in Waco, Texas, and has been teaching at Spartanburg Methodist College since 2007. He is the author of “The Father of Modern Landmarkism: The Life of Ben M. Bogard,” and has contributed several research articles to educational journals.

He was serving as a youth minister in 1998 when he met Tracy Jessup, then director of admissions for the GWU School of Divinity and now vice president for the Office of Christian Life and Service and senior minister to the University. “Tracy was very helpful in answering my questions about what a Master of Divinity degree would require,” Pratt recalled. “He was very open and honest and did an outstanding job of describing the program at Gardner-Webb. He followed up with a letter and phone calls.”

photo of Kris Pratt in the classroom

After weighing his options, Pratt chose GWU and started exploring his call to the ministry. “The professors encouraged me to discover and use my gifts and challenged me to think of ministry in ways that extended beyond the ministries I had experienced,” he shared. “When I began to think about pursuing a Ph.D. in religion, the GWU professors talked with me about which graduate programs would be best for me. They wrote letters of recommendation and helped with my application to doctoral programs.”

While many of those professors have retired, Pratt is certain their legacy continues to live in his life and the lives of other students they influenced. “It was at the GWU School of Divinity that I truly learned to love God with all of my mind,” he emphasized. “The teaching of Don Cook and Gerald Keown opened the world of the Bible in new ways. They helped me see the larger story of the Bible as never before, and their classes laid the foundation for the other classes I took. Sheri Adams and Bob Adams had a habit of ‘adopting’ students throughout their GWU careers. They invited my wife and me to their house for dinner and have remained a presence in our lives. When I talk with more recent graduates of the School of

Divinity, I hear that they had similar experiences of professors broadening their understanding of the scriptures and establishing long-lasting relationships with their students.”