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Office of University Communications

November 2, 2017

Generous Gardner Foundation Gift to Launch Unique Student Success Program

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Gardner-Webb University is pleased to announce a leadership gift by the Gardner Foundation to establish a new student-focused program at Gardner-Webb University.

On behalf of the Gardner Foundation, O. Max Gardner III, grandson of institutional namesakes O. Max Gardner and Fay Webb Gardner, has committed a generous, three-year gift to the University to launch the "Fay Webb Gardner Master Mentorship Program." The program includes the creation of a new endowed chair to center exclusively on mentorship as a means of enriching the undergraduate experience of students who demonstrate superior academic potential.



 photo of Fay Webb Gardner

Fay Webb Gardner

Gardner-Webb University President Dr. Frank Bonner stated the Gardner Foundation gift was the latest example of the family's great tradition of providing visionary support to the University. "Without question, the Gardner and Webb families have had a profound influence on the fortunes of this University," Bonner reflected. "It is fitting and proper that the new Master Mentorship program to advance undergraduate research will bear the name of Fay Webb Gardner. She loved Gardner-Webb, generously investing her time, resources and great intellect to help us pursue excellence. We are deeply grateful to the Gardner Foundation and family for their continuing friendship and dedication to Gardner-Webb."

The gift was announced during a press conference on Thursday, Nov. 2, at Tucker Student Center and coincides with the 75th anniversary of the name "Gardner-Webb College" replacing "Boiling Springs Junior College" in 1942. Fay Webb Gardner was the wife of O. Max Gardner, governor of North Carolina from 1929 – 1933. One of her husband's most trusted advisors, Mrs. Gardner was also widely respected for her own political and business leadership in the state. She served on the GWU Board of Trustees and was committed to transforming Gardner-Webb into a school of distinction.

"The O. Max Gardner Foundation wants to honor Fay Webb Gardner's memory and recognize the fact that but for her dedication to and support of Gardner-Webb University after the death of Governor Gardner, we would not be sitting here today at this place and at this University," shared O. Max Gardner III. "She was truly a 'national woman' who was decades ahead of her time. The 'Webb' in Gardner-Webb University is attributed to her, and her family and the Foundation want her essential role in the history and life of this great university recognized and preserved."

The Fay Webb Gardner Master Mentorship Program will be one of the few mentorship programs of its kind in U.S. higher education. A key feature of the program will be the naming of a faculty member to serve as the Fay Webb Gardner Chair of Student Success. The chair will be an established professor at GWU with a proven track record of extraordinary investment in students, leading to consistently-successful outcomes. In this role, the professor would be relieved of half of his/her teaching load responsibilities in order to provide individualized attention towards student research and internship projects, fellowship applications, and career guidance.

"The Gardner Foundation has been bold in allowing us to venture into this area and explore how we can expand student mentoring in a way that few other colleges in America are trying to do," observed Dr. Joseph Moore, special assistant to the president for Academic Enhancement and assistant professor of history. "The model at most universities in the country is to place researchers in the most prestigious positions and support their own research. Our program makes the prestigious positions the ones that support *student* research. GWU is already better than most schools in the nation at mentoring undergraduate students. Through this program, we want to create an even more intentional focus on what we are passionate about."

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.