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### **Cleveland County, N.C., Recognized Nationwide for Efforts to Support Entrepreneurs**

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# Cleveland County, N.C., Recognized Nationwide for Efforts to Support Entrepreneurs

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Office of University  
Communications

October 27, 2017

## *Two Gardner-Webb University Business Professors Serve on Leadership Team*

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Officials in Cleveland County, N.C., recently received national recognition for achieving Certified Entrepreneurial Community (CEC) status.

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Dr. Anthony Negbenebor

The CEC Core Leadership Team, which includes business owners, government leaders and educators, was asked by the National Association for Community College Entrepreneurship (NACCE) to create a webinar about the strategic planning activities and methods used to achieve certification.

Serving on the CEC Core Leadership Team are two business professors from Gardner-Webb University— Dr. Anthony Negbenebor, professor of economics and international business, and Dr. Christine Sutton, assistant professor of business administration. “The CEC status is important for Cleveland County, because it assists with economic development and incubation of small businesses,” Negbenebor commented. “It is a ‘carrot’ for new industries.”

Cleveland Community College (CCC) in Shelby, N.C., is the administrative sponsoring organization of the CEC program. On the NACCE website, the webinar is described as “a real-world case study from Cleveland County.” Featured are CEC Team Leader, Steve Padgett, director of the Small Business Center at CCC, as well as the Community Consultant and CEC Partner, Emily Breedlove. They discuss the proven model of the CEC program and how the county’s leadership is building an entrepreneur-friendly community.

The CEC Core Leadership Team began the process in April 2015. Sutton joined the group last year after they received certification. The group continues to meet to

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Dr. Christine Sutton

establish a long-term strategy for fostering and promoting entrepreneurship in Cleveland County and the surrounding area. “Entrepreneurial endeavors are critical for continuous economic development,” Sutton offered. “Entrepreneurship is really a mindset that drives innovation and growth. When a community embraces this entrepreneurial mindset, the possibilities are endless. The goal is to provide the resources and guidance to entrepreneurs at every level of business development.”

Other members of the Leadership Team are Deedi Barry, retired CPA; Jason Falls, Cleveland County manager; Tony Fogleman, Cleveland County Schools; Fred Harrill, entrepreneur/owner of RollOver Pets in Shelby; Rick Howell, Shelby city manager; David Pharr, entrepreneur/owner of Pharr Technologies in Shelby; Mary Renfer, entrepreneur/owner of Broad River Co. in Boiling Springs; Bill Watson, Cleveland County Chamber; and Dr. John Lattimore, Ken Mooney and Chance Witherspoon, all from CCC.

*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.*