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Office of University
Communications

April 11, 2017

Recent Mock Board Meeting Offers Doctoral Students Opportunities to Practice Individual Leadership Skills

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – An activity involving current and former members of the Cleveland County Board of Education assisted Gardner-Webb University graduate students in a uniquely tangible way during a school board simulation recently in Shelby.

school board simulation, photo 1

Dr. Bruce Boyles, associate professor of education at GWU, teaches the Organizational Behavior Module graduate-level course, which surveys historical and contemporary issues in law and ethics in relationship to the educational setting. “One of the goals of the School of Education has been to develop meaningful opportunities for students to use simulations for assessing their readiness to assume positions of greater leadership in school districts,” Boyles shared. “The idea for this simulation came from a training experience at Stanford University in the development of embedded assessments.”

On a Saturday morning in March, students gathered at the Cleveland County Schools Central Office facility and presented draft

school board simulation, photo 2

policies in a mock meeting. Current and former school board members who participated in the simulation included Phillip Glover, Dr. Jack Hamrick, Roger Harris, Dr. George Litton, Shearra Miller, and Donnie Thurman. “Board members conducted the simulation just as they would conduct a regular meeting,” Boyles stated. “They followed a typical agenda, discussed the draft policies, offered feedback on revisions they would like to see, and voted their approval of the policy drafts.”

During the meeting, students were asked to make a presentation to the board members on the need for their policy, explain legal references and implications, field questions from the board about policy specifics, and discuss the implementation process. “Following the meeting, students repeatedly commented on the value of the simulation, with many sharing that it had been the first opportunity they had to stand before school board members and present material for consideration,” Boyles said. “I had several students tell me that it was one of the most significant learning opportunities they have experienced in their doctoral studies.”

At the conclusion of the simulation, students met informally with the board members to discuss their policies, and they toured the Cleveland County Schools Central Services facility and Turning Point Academy, both located on West Sumter Street in Shelby.

school board simulation, photo 3

Boyles hopes to develop additional training simulations with board of education and district leadership teams for students. “Based on the tremendous success of this activity and the excellent support of local board members,” he said, “I believe additional simulations will be of great benefit to students.”

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