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Office of University
Communications

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Eight Undergraduates to Experience Politics in Action as 45th U.S. President Takes Oath of Office

photo of the U.S. Capitol building

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Gardner-Webb University will once again send a contingency of students to the U.S. Capitol to participate in the country’s 58th inauguration ceremony, set for Friday, Jan. 20, in Washington D.C.

University students have participated in presidential inauguration events for decades, regardless of political affiliation. Nate Allman, David Cole, Eli Hardin, Sydney Hardin, Bailey Hierholzer, A.J. Horner, Luke Kunkel, and Lauren Mahoney will attend inaugural events surrounding the swearing-in process for President-elect Donald Trump. Cole, of Clover, S.C., who also attended the second inauguration ceremony for President Barack Obama in 2012, believes opportunities like this will further solidify his career aspirations.

“As a political science major at Gardner-Webb, I’ve learned a lot about the U. S. government, the office of the Presidency, and the history and impact of political parties,” he shared. “I’ve written papers, attended lectures, taken part in discussions, and conducted intensive research. This will be an opportunity for me to extend those studies—and the knowledge that I gained—and take it into the real world. Nothing beats seeing politics in action. This is a special moment for me and my fellow students because we spent the entire fall semester analyzing and predicting the outcome of the election.”

Eli Hardin of Boiling Springs, also a political science major, agrees with Cole’s assessment. “It is one thing to read about history in the classroom or discuss current events around the lunch table but it is another thing to be able to witness and take part in them firsthand,” he offered. “This experience will help me better understand the political process, and the best way to learn about something is to participate in it.”

The GWU group plans to visit Arlington National Cemetery and the Pentagon 9/11 Memorial on Thursday, Jan. 19. On Friday, they will attend the swearing-in ceremony, observe the inaugural parade, and then embark on a walking tour of Washington with a focus on significant memorials and monuments. Over the weekend, they plan to visit the

Smithsonian and other museums to learn more about American history and hope to enjoy a tour of the U.S. Capitol. They will attend the morning worship service at the Washington National Cathedral before returning to Gardner-Webb on Sunday afternoon.

AJ Horner of Wilkesboro, N.C., a political science and business administration double major, has a special place in his heart for the nation's capitol. "I love Washington D.C., and just getting to walk around the city amongst all the history and importance of the work that is accomplished there is such an awesome feeling," he reflected. "Attending the inauguration will also be an amazing experience as I will have the opportunity to witness one of the cornerstones of our democracy: the peaceful transition of power."

According to Cole, being among the next generation of students from Gardner-Webb to participate in an inauguration ceremony is more than special. "It really does feel like we are taking part in history," he reflected. "Going to an important event like this helps us connect to GWU classes and generations past. We're part of something bigger just like past students were, and that feeling is invaluable."

Participation in these events does not represent an affirmation of any partisanship on the part of the University. In order to protect the academic and intellectual freedom of our students, faculty and staff alike, Gardner-Webb does not privilege or endorse any particular political perspective, candidate or party.

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University's purpose is to advance the Kingdom of God through Christian higher education by preparing graduates for professional and personal success, instilling in them a deep commitment to service and leadership, and equipping them for well-rounded lives of lasting impact, Pro Deo et Humanitate (For God and Humanity).