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### **GWU Business Professor Remembered for His 'Exuberant Personality'**

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# GWU Business Professor Remembered for His ‘Exuberant Personality’

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Office of University  
Communications

December 12, 2016

## *Dr. Tom Meaders Shared NASA Experiences with his Students*

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Members of the Gardner-Webb University community are mourning the loss of Dr. Tom Meaders, Professor of Management Information Systems and Operations. Remembered by his colleagues for his enthusiasm and dedication to the University, Meaders passed away Saturday, Dec. 10, 2016, at his home in Cary, N.C.

“Tom Meaders was a bright spot on the faculty of the Godbold School of Business,” affirmed Dr. Van Graham, Associate Dean of the Godbold School of Business. “He was always positive, encouraging, committed and an articulate advocate of his faith. Whatever needed done, no matter how hard, the answer was always yes. His infectious laugh and his exuberant personality will be greatly missed by his friends and colleagues.”

Meaders joined the GWU faculty in 2002 after working more than 33 years as an industrial engineer for IBM. For 22 of those years, he served in IBM’s space program. He and his team programmed the software for the Saturn V rocket’s navigation system. The rocket served as the vehicle of choice for nearly all of NASA’s Apollo moon missions, including the nearly-disastrous Apollo 13 lunar landing mission that launched on April 11, 1970, and involved three crew members: astronauts Jim Lovell, Jack Swigert, and Fred Haise.

Apollo 13’s lunar landing was aborted after an oxygen tank exploded and several unique and life-threatening events ensued. Meaders and a team of IBM software professionals were tasked with writing a computer program to bring the astronauts home. In a day and a half, the team developed a program that normally took a minimum of six months to test for accuracy. After approval by four other teams, the program was transmitted to the lunar module. The astronauts arrived safely back to earth on April 17, 1970, after six days in space.

In his information systems courses at Gardner-Webb, Meaders shared his knowledge about the space program with students. He believed students benefited from having instructors who were able to connect business principles with real-world experiences. “I think it’s a wonderful thing for people who have been successful in business to transition to higher education and teach what they know,” Meaders observed in a 2015 interview. “And the Godbold School of Business is full of people like that. It’s the best second career a person could have.”

Meaders received his Ph.D. from the University of Alabama in Huntsville and his bachelor's and master's degrees from New Mexico State University. Meaders is survived by his wife, Janet, and daughter, Meredith.

*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).*