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2017 U.S. News Best Colleges List Places GWU in “National University” Category for First Time in History

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Office of University
Communications

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Doctoral Program Growth Yields New, Elite Status for Gardner-Webb University

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – The 2017 U.S. News Best Colleges List is in, and Gardner-Webb University is positioned among the top 20 percent of higher education institutions in the nation. In addition, GWU is one of just six National Universities in the country that reported no classes with more than 50 students in 2015.

Recently, Gardner-Webb achieved Doctoral University status with The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, moving from a pool of some 750 institutions in the U.S. to an elite list of just 334 in the nation. Among private schools in North Carolina, only Gardner-Webb, Duke University (Durham) and Wake Forest University (Winston-Salem) share the Doctoral University (Carnegie) and National University (U.S. News) categorization.

“Like the move to NCAA Division I athletics over a decade ago, Gardner-Webb University’s new classification is simply one more indicator of the remarkable growth the University has experienced in recent years,” shared GWU Provost and Executive Vice President Dr. Ben Leslie. “The most rapid growth has been in the area of graduate degrees, particularly in education, nursing and our new physician assistant program.”

U. S. News utilizes the Carnegie classification system to develop its annual rankings. According to officials, the Carnegie categories are “the accepted standard in higher education.” Although U.S. News created the category names (National Universities, National Liberal Arts Colleges, Regional Universities and Regional Colleges), their definitions are based upon the Carnegie principles.

“National Universities offer a full range of undergraduate majors, plus master’s and doctoral programs, and emphasize faculty research,” share Eric Brooks, Matt Mason, and Robert Morse of U.S. News. “National Liberal Arts Colleges focus almost exclusively on undergraduate education. They award at least 50 percent of their degrees in the arts and sciences.

“Regional Universities offer a broad scope of undergraduate degrees and some master’s degree programs but few, if any, doctoral programs. Regional Colleges focus on undergraduate education but grant fewer than 50 percent of their degrees in liberal arts disciplines; this category also includes schools that have small bachelor’s degree programs but primarily grant two-year associate degrees. Regional Universities and Regional Colleges are further divided and ranked in four geographical groups: North, South, Midwest and West.”

In 2015, Gardner-Webb was in the Regional University-South category. This year, due to its doctoral program growth, GWU is listed as a first-tier, National University. The only institutions in North Carolina with National University status are Duke, East Carolina, Gardner-Webb, NC State, UNC at Greensboro, UNC at Chapel Hill, UNC at Charlotte, and Wake Forest.

“This new classification,” Leslie affirmed, “is simply one measure of the success that the University has been blessed with as we continue to expand the kinds of educational opportunities available both on the Gardner-Webb campus and through our distance education programs.”

Since 1983, U.S. News & World Report has provided education rankings to assist parents and students in choosing a school. U.S. News recommends that readers think of the rankings as one tool for selecting a college. They recognize that prospective students must consider a range of priorities when choosing a school, including their academic and professional goals, financial resources, scholastic record and other special needs. To view the 2017 U.S. News Best Schools list, visit usnews.com/rankings.

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University offers a comprehensive academic experience that introduces students to the diverse world of ideas and to the people who think them, preparing them not only for professional success but for lives marked by empathy, compassion and a commitment to service on the broadest scale.