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Gardner-Webb University Awards Degrees During Exercises on May 9

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Office of University
Communications

May 9, 2015

Two Separate Ceremonies Honor Nearly 600 Graduates

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Gardner–Webb University hosted Spring Commencement exercises on Saturday, May 9, in the Lutz-Yelton Convocation Center at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. Nearly 600 graduates were honored during the two ceremonies.

Morning Undergraduate Programs Ceremony (10 a.m.)

The morning ceremony featured nearly 300 graduates of Gardner-Webb’s Degree Completion Program (DCP) and the traditional undergraduate program.

Several morning graduates were honored for outstanding leadership, citizenship, and academic excellence. The Most Outstanding Male Graduate medal was presented to Delton Wayne Barnes of Conyers, Ga., while Charity Anne Byrum of Winston-Salem, N.C., was awarded the Most Outstanding Female Graduate medal.

Senior Scholastic Award recipients included Byrum, Heather Briane Feldman of Eden, N.Y., Kristin Nicole Allison of Old Fort, N.C., Matthew Taylor Yelverton of Matthews, N.C., and Megan Ashley Polzin of Cary, N.C. The Degree Completion Program Scholastic Award was presented to Billie Shannon Pierce of Gaffney, S.C.

Barnes, who earned a Bachelor of Science in Sport Management, offered a commencement address in which he shared thoughts on the wisdom and knowledge he gleaned from his time at Gardner-Webb. “You will never be able to repay those who have sacrificed and invested to see that you get to this place,” he said. “So starting today, use your knowledge and wisdom—physically represented by this diploma—to begin making graceful payments into the lives of those who will never be able to repay you. And I assure you that a generation committed to compassion will see the overthrow of sorrow in their own world.”

Scott Johnson of Wilmington, N.C., who received a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, also offered words of wisdom through his commencement address. “Give back to the community and Gardner-Webb in some way,” he encouraged fellow graduates. “It’s an ongoing cycle that needs to continue to grow. The more the class of 2015 does after graduation, the more of a name we build for Gardner-Webb and to return that investment is one of the most valuable things we can do as alumni, citizens, and people of this world.”

The ceremony also featured special recognitions and the conferring of two honorary degrees and one posthumous degree.

The GWU School of Nursing awarded an honorary posthumous degree to the family of Kate Barnett (Fairview, N.C.), who was tragically killed in a car accident last November. At the time of her death, Barnett was enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program. Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degrees were conferred to C. Neal Alexander of Denver, N.C., and Frank Stewart of Belmont, N.C.

Afternoon Graduate Programs Ceremony (3 p.m.)

The afternoon ceremony featured the conferring of over 250 degrees from the University's graduate programs. Elizabeth Hope Arnold of Drexel, N.C., who earned a Master of Divinity in Biblical Studies, offered a speech during the ceremony. She shared how thankful she was to be given the opportunity to fully embrace the Gardner-Webb experience. "From the first day of class, it was apparent that we would not all think alike, but we began to understand that our identity as the Kingdom of God does not depend on our uniformity, but rather on our love for one another," Arnold reflected. "Today, we celebrate *our* success, the accomplishment we could not have obtained without each other. I am profoundly grateful for this community of faithful, loving people and the privilege to walk alongside them as friends. I was asked to summarize my experience at Gardner-Webb School of Divinity. To put it simply—it was absolutely *divine!*"

Doctor of Ministry graduate Garin Hunt Hill of Shelby, N.C., also shared gratitude on behalf of the graduating class. "In the end, most of all, we thank our only wise God: the first Igniter of faith that seeks understanding, knowledge that captures our minds, and love that sets us free," Hill declared. "May we forever, with reckless abandon, proclaim, 'Thank You.'"



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/31uSr5QAPfY>

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).