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July 18, 2014

Institutions Sign Agreements to Simplify Degree Completion Process

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Gardner-Webb University and Cleveland Community College announced a partnership this week that will further ease the transfer process for students who complete certain degrees with coursework at both institutions.

Officials for both schools signed agreements to create a seamless degree track for accounting, business administration, entrepreneurship, industrial management, and nursing students who begin their studies at Cleveland Community College and finish them in the University's Degree Completion Program. The agreements, called Pathways to reference the structured paths of study between the two schools, formalize a degree partnership that already exists between GWU and CCC, according to officials.

“Pathways agreements make it easier for a student to transfer all or most of the credits earned at the community college,” said GWU Provost and Executive Vice President Ben Leslie. “The student knows early in the process what will transfer and what he or she needs to take in order to maximize time at Gardner-Webb.”

Students will save time and money thanks to the partnership, which aligns Pathways-associated major courses at GWU and CCC to reduce instances of course repetition and loss. A streamlined major program allows students to enter the workforce sooner and with less financial debt from college costs, according to officials. “While we have been accepting CCC students into our Degree Completion Program for many years, these agreements will formalize transition pathways that enable them to seamlessly transfer from the community college to Gardner-Webb,” said Dr. Bobbie Cox, GWU Associate Provost of the College of Adult and Distance Education. “This is a collaborative partnership that is student-centered and takes into consideration the goals and needs of both institutions.”

Additionally, Pathways allows students entering major programs to begin planning their educational path during their high school years, with academic advising assistance from both CCC and GWU.

More Cleveland Community College students transfer to Gardner-Webb than to any other university, according to Dr. Shannon Kennedy, CCC Executive Vice President of Instruction and Student Development. “A formal agreement that very clearly directs a student in which courses to take is extremely beneficial,” Kennedy offered. “Knowing which CCC courses

Gardner-Webb will accept ahead of time helps a student stay directed and keeps them from taking unnecessary courses. Having clear guidelines will help our faculty as they advise students who are planning to transfer to Gardner-Webb.”

Gardner-Webb officials are currently examining additional opportunities to formalize similar transfer agreements with other community colleges in North Carolina. The University maintains an active relationship with many community colleges, including Degree Completion Program sites on a half-dozen campuses.

“The Pathways Agreements are a powerful resource for students looking to get the most out of their education,” Leslie offered. “They are emblematic of the strong partnership between Gardner-Webb and the state’s community college system that we have been nurturing for over three decades through our Degree Completion Program. It is our hope that both students and the communities where they work will be well-served as a result.”

Established in 1965, Cleveland Community College provides diverse and accessible learning opportunities to meet the educational and training needs of its community. For more information, visit clevelandcc.edu.

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 for professional success and for productive citizenship. For more information on the Degree Completion Program, visit gardner-webb.edu/DCP.