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Gardner-Webb Mourns Loss of School of Business Dean Emeritus

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Office of University Communications

June 25, 2014

Jim Crawley Remembered for Leading GWU Growth, Serving Community

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. — Gardner-Webb University Dean

Emeritus Jim Crawley, instrumental in the successful growth and national recognition of the University's business school, passed away Saturday, June 21 at the age of 84.

Crawley began his tenure at Gardner-Webb in 1994, after retiring from Dupont, Inc. He served as the first dean of the University's business school—during which the school moved into its current home in E.B. Hamrick Hall—as well as chairman of GWU's undergraduate business program.

According to current GWU President Frank Bonner, Crawley will be remembered as one of the great administrative and academic leaders in the University's history. "After a highly successful career with E.I. DuPont deNemours and Company, Jim was persuaded to come to Gardner-Webb University to assume the role of Dean of the School of Business," Bonner said. "Highly respected by everyone, he provided much needed leadership and direction for the School of Business, and with his guidance it flourished. Jim had the special ability to bring his business experience into the academic world with great success. Upon his retirement from Gardner-Webb, he was recognized with the distinction of Dean Emeritus. He was a man of strong character and integrity as well as an engaging personality. Jim Crawley was everything that an administrator and leader should be, and his place in the history of this University is secure."

Among many accomplishments under Crawley's leadership, the business school's enrollment increased significantly, the school increased the number of doctorates on its faculty, and the Master's Degree in Business Administration (MBA) program expanded to additional satellite campuses. Upon his retirement from the University in 1998, Crawley was conferred the status of dean emeritus.

National accolades crowned the business school during Crawley's tenure, including recognition by Executive Forum as an "emerging school." In the two decades since Crawley's leadership, the business school has garnered numerous honors for its graduate, online and other various programs.

“He was a great friend and one of my mentors,” said Dr. Anthony Negbenebor, dean of the GWU Godbold School of Business. “He was very astute in management, and I learned a great deal from him. He is responsible for many of the successes we have in the business school. He paved the way for other deans, and that is why I called him the dean of deans. He strongly encouraged creativity and new ideas. He was loved by everybody, and he surely will be missed.”

Born and raised in Rutherford County, N.C., Crawley served four years in the U.S. Navy and later worked as a civilian trainer for the U.S. Air Force. Following his military service, he completed a degree in mechanical engineering at Clemson University. Crawley then joined Dupont for a career that transported him to many locations in United States and Germany.

Crawley also served as a Cleveland County (N.C.) commissioner from 1994 to 2000, including two terms as commission chairman. One of his most significant contributions as a commissioner was his work toward the consolidation of Cleveland County’s three public school districts, which was approved in 2000 and completed in 2004. His community service also included work with the United Way, Cleveland Regional Medical Center, Communities In Schools, Cleveland Tomorrow and Executive Roundtable.

Following his career, Crawley retired with his wife, Marcie, to Summerville, S.C. He continued to serve his community at Summerville Presbyterian Church, as a board member for Dorchester Habitat for Humanity, and in other organizations. Marcie Crawley passed away on Oct. 26, 2013. The couple is survived by their son, Steve, their daughter, Sharon, and four grandchildren.

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University provides exceptional educational opportunities within a Christian environment, preparing students to think critically, to succeed professionally, and to serve faithfully as members of their local and global communities.