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September 11, 2013

New PA Program Set to Begin in January 2014

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Gardner-Webb University's Physician Assistant Studies Program has received accreditation-provisional from the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA). Provisional accreditation is an accreditation status for a new PA program that has not yet enrolled students, but has demonstrated its preparedness to initiate a program in accordance with ARC-PA accreditation standards. Regional accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools-Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC) is still pending.

In May of 2012, leaders announced that Gardner-Webb would launch a physician assistant (PA) studies program beginning in 2014. University officials believe the new PA program will help address an increasing need within the healthcare industry for primary care providers by training medical professionals for the primary care field.

Dr. Gregory Davenport, a physician assistant with a doctorate in health science, is the dean and program director. "GWU is embracing the opportunity to create a program that will address a dire need for health care access among traditionally underserved populations," he shared. "The provisional accreditation approval shows that we are exactly where we need to be in the accreditation process.

The next steps of accreditation include a provisional monitoring visit within six months of the program's inaugural cohort graduation and again 18-24 months after that visit."

Set to begin in January, the program will last 28 months and will be broken into two parts. During the first 16 months, students will take classes five days a week, for approximately eight hours a day. The second half of the program will feature hands-on learning experiences in local hospitals and doctors' offices.

Davenport said the physician assistant program at Gardner-Webb will focus on the fundamentals of the PA profession—diagnosing and treating common medical conditions as part of a physician-PA team. "Our goal is to get PAs back into that primary care arena, and help close that gap between access to care and patient demand," he offered. "To make this happen, Gardner-Webb's PA program aims to expand the healing gifts that students already possess."

To achieve this goal, the didactic year curriculum will include innovative approaches to education including essential skills training, the use of patient models (actors, task trainers, etc.) and problem-based and team-based learning. The didactic training will be followed by nine clinical experiential rotations, each lasting three to six weeks.

For more information about the program, contact Brittney Blanton, assistant to the dean and admissions liaison, at 704-406-2369 or email paprogram@gardner-webb.edu.

Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University blends a liberal arts core curriculum with more than 55 major and minor professional programs of study, a comprehensive academic experience that flows from our Christian commitment to intellectual freedom, service and leadership.