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### Gardner-Webb University Awards Nearly 750 Degrees

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# Gardner-Webb University Awards Nearly 750 Degrees

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Office of University Communications

May 14, 2013

## *Three Separate Ceremonies Honor 742 Graduates*

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Gardner–Webb University hosted Spring Commencement on Monday, May 13 in the Lutz-Yelton Convocation Center at 10 a.m., 3 p.m., and 7 p.m. and nearly 750 graduates were honored during the three ceremonies. The University awarded its 26,000th overall degree and its 6,000th graduate degree during the celebration.

### **Morning Traditional Undergraduate Ceremony (10 a.m.)**

Several morning graduates were honored for outstanding leadership, citizenship, and academic excellence. The Most Outstanding Male Graduate medal was presented to history major Madison Ward Cates of Hillsborough, N.C. while Michelle Anne Palacio of Charlotte, N.C., a double major in global studies and political science, was awarded the Most Outstanding Female Graduate medal.

Four seniors were recognized for academic achievement as they received the Senior Scholastic Awards. They were Amy Rebecca Snyder (Winston-Salem, N.C.), Bachelor of Arts in English and History; Bradley Chase McCraw (Shelby, N.C.), Bachelor of Science in Chemistry; Hannah Rachel Rash (Kannapolis, N.C.), Bachelor of Science in Psychology; and Tyler Matthew Beckler (Hickory, N.C.), Bachelor of Science in Biology and Missiology.

Palacio also shared thoughts on her years at Gardner-Webb in a commencement address. She expressed that her educational experience at GWU was much more than the sum of her courses and assignments. “There were times when I wasn’t sure how I would make it through, but I was always encouraged by the fact that all of us were doing it together,” she told her fellow graduates. “Each of the things we learned, while not necessarily in a classroom, added value to our education.”



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/PartUAIKA5Q>

### **Afternoon GOAL and Graduate Programs Ceremony (3 p.m.)**

The afternoon ceremony featured graduates of Gardner-Webb's Greater Opportunities for Adult Learners (GOAL) program and School of Nursing, School of Divinity, and School of Business graduate programs. Two graduates were honored with the GOAL Senior Scholastic Award: Joshua Robert Valentine and Gabrielle Renee Waites, both from Rutherfordton, N.C., were each given the award for academic excellence. They both graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Accounting.

Tara Elizabeth Roberts of Shelby, N.C. (Bachelor of Science in Nursing) and Calvin Sayles of Colorado Springs, Colo. (Doctor of Ministry, School of Divinity) both offered commencement addresses during the ceremony. For Sayles, the spiritual formation component of his education has become a valued treasure.

"At Gardner-Webb, I found professors and mentors who led me to unpack my own beliefs and then patiently and gently helped me examine each one," Sayles shared. "Some were discarded and repacked, stronger for the examination. Many were added. And in the process, our God became greater and more incredibly wondrous, not in His reality, but in my understanding. I am certain this was their greatest gift to me."

### **Evening Graduate Programs Ceremony (7 p.m.)**

The evening ceremony honored individuals who successfully completed masters or doctoral curriculum within the School of Education and School of Psychology and Counseling. Heather Hartsell of Shelby, N.C., an athletic training program faculty member at Gardner-

Webb who earned a Doctor of Education, offered her thoughts on the post-baccalaureate challenges she and her fellow graduates endured, and the valuable life lessons they have provided.

“Each interaction with an individual in this program has touched my life and provided examples of characteristics I want to make sure I possess and apply in my everyday life as a person and as an educator,” Hartsell declared. “Compassion, sacrifice, strong work ethic, encouragement, passion for educating others, devotion to students, setting high expectations for students, but also helping them to reach such expectations, and so many more. I have learned that each day is an opportunity for us to be intentional in the relationships we have with others.”

Another Doctor of Education graduate, Thomas LeGrand of Taylors, S.C., discussed aspects of his educational experience during his commencement address. As a minister who initially questioned his decision to enter the realm of education, he believes he has learned valuable lessons about the benefits of widening one’s sphere of influence.

“In all disciplines, we tend to ‘circle the wagons’ and remain inside of our little forts, unchallenged by and unaware of what others might bring to the table,” LeGrand reflected. “We build our most valuable and educational relationships when we open the doors to engage with those that are outside of our normal realm and subsequently learn from one another. This is the kind of innovative thinking and relationship-building that is allowing Gardner-Webb to continue to grow into a unique and special place.”

Gardner-Webb honored the memory of two former students, who passed away last year while working on degrees at the University. GWU awarded posthumous honorary degrees to the families of Ariane Patterson and Glenda Weaver during the morning and afternoon ceremonies. Both Patterson and Weaver were in good academic standing at the time of their deaths, and both women displayed three characteristics which help define Gardner-Webb University: faith, service, and leadership.

*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).*