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Office of University Communications

May 9, 2013

Memories of Ariane Patterson and Glenda Weaver Honored May 13

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Gardner-Webb University honored the memory of two former students, who passed away last year while still enrolled as students, as they awarded posthumous honorary degrees to the families of Ariane Patterson and Glenda Weaver during spring graduation ceremonies on May 13.

Patterson's unexpected death occurred on Jan. 17, 2012 on her actual birthday at the age of 21. It was determined that Patterson suffered a heart attack due to systemic lupus erythematosus. She had been diagnosed with lupus at the age of nine. Patterson, of Rutherford County, N.C., was a religious studies major, who was known for always displaying a Godly spirit and an infectious smile. At her funeral, a group of Patterson's friends and fellow students from GWU presented a poem they wrote about her entitled *A Friend*. "A friend is someone who brings out the best of you. Our best friend will forever and always be Ariane Noelle Patterson," the poem stated. On that final day of her life, Patterson shared a tweet that was became a testimonial of who she was and what she believed: "Thank you God for another year of life." The Patterson family received an honorary bachelors degree on her behalf during the 10 a.m. traditional undergraduate ceremony.

A native and resident of Cabarrus County, N.C., Weaver worked for Kannapolis City Schools and served as teacher at Head Start for 16 years. Head Start, a federally-funded program targeting children ages three through five, provides a variety of services to children and their families, including education in the form of preschool, nutrition, and medical services. Colleagues described Weaver as a caring and devoted teacher to her students and the families that she served in through Head Start. She began her teaching career as a parent and volunteer in the program and went on to earn her bachelor's degree from Catawba College in Salisbury, N.C. At the time of her death on Oct. 24, 2012, Weaver, 55, was pursuing a master's degree from Gardner-Webb. Members of the Weaver family received an honorary masters degree on her behalf during the 7 p.m. graduate programs ceremony.

Both Patterson and Weaver were in good academic standing at the time of their deaths, which enabled the University to make the decision to reward their degrees during this special occasion.

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 career success and for engaged, responsible citizenship in their professional, civic, and spiritual communities.