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### Fellows Scholarship Competition Showcases Gardner-Webb to Top Students

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# Fellows Scholarship Competition Showcases Gardner-Webb to Top Students

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Office of University Communications

February 8, 2013

## *Teens from Across the Nation Vie for Significant Four-Year Scholarships to Attend GWU*

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Over 140 of the nation’s best and brightest high school seniors are now more familiar with the Gardner-Webb experience after taking part in the annual Fellows Scholarship Competition recently held on campus. Coordinated each year by the GWU Department of Undergraduate Admissions, the series offers students and their parents an opportunity to win one of 12 significant scholarships to attend the University this fall.

A “Presidential Scholarship” is awarded to five students for full tuition, room and board for their four years of undergraduate course work at Gardner-Webb. Five “Academic Scholarships,” representing full-tuition for four years are awarded; and two “University Scholarships” are given, which provide 80-percent tuition for the recipient for four years.

According to Kristen Setzer, associate vice president for undergraduate admissions, nearly 50 percent of students who visit campus as part of the Fellows Scholarship Competition will ultimately decide to attend Gardner-Webb, but she would prefer they *all* decide to make GWU their future college home. Angie Sundell, senior associate director of undergraduate admissions believes it is important for students to see and experience the value of Gardner-Webb. “During the college decision process, students need to visit campus so they can begin to connect with other students, hear of opportunities awaiting them, and see firsthand where they will study, sleep, eat, and play,” Sundell shared. “Picturing their involvement on campus can give them a clear indication of their future as a college student here.”

The Fellows schedule of events is certainly geared toward giving potential students a taste of the “Gardner-Webb Experience,” and offering them as much of an emotional connection to the University as possible. “Many people have reported that they knew right away that Gardner-Webb was the right fit for them,” explained Dr. Frank Bonner, GWU President. “Something clicks for them when they step on campus and God moves in their heart and they just ‘know’ this is where they are meant to be.”

For Setzer, Sundell, and the admissions team, helping students link the concept of enrolling at Gardner-Webb even if they don’t receive scholarship assistance is an important component of their message. During planned activities, including an on-campus luncheon at Tucker Student Center, teens and their families hear from both previous Fellows recipients and those who went through the interview process but were not selected.

“I want to encourage you that if you don’t receive a Fellows scholarship, that doesn’t mean the door to Gardner-Webb has closed,” said Mary Hellstrom, a junior Biblical studies major from Naples, Fla. “I didn’t receive a Fellows scholarship. Yet, I knew that this was the place for me, and even turned down a full-ride to the University of Florida so I could come here. I’ve never regretted that decision.”

Dr. Earl Leininger, associate provost for arts & sciences, is passionate about the benefits of a liberal arts education, and he shares a few of the ideals with interviewees during the luncheon. “We will ask you to grapple with inconvenient questions that don’t have easy answers,” Leininger declared. “We want you to learn how to come to terms with a dilemma whose answer cannot be determined by a show of hands.”

With the theme “Embrace the Experience, Impact the World,” the Fellows Scholarship Competition process is intense and thought-provoking for participants. Students selected for interviews carry a grade point average of 4.4 and an average of 1240 on the SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test). Many are also being courted by other top institutions including Duke, Baylor, UNC Chapel Hill, Biola, Clemson, and Furman, among others. According to Leininger, Gardner-Webb’s ideals of faith, service, and leadership help set it apart from many other well-known colleges and universities.

“We are committed to the idea that education is a staging ground for action, and service can be done both through one’s career and through volunteerism,” Leininger reflected.

Participants in the Fellows interview process are exposed to everything Gardner-Webb has to offer. From friendly student interactions, to one-on-one conversations with professors, to residence hall life, no stone is left unturned in their quest for information. This no-holds-barred approach might leave other universities feeling vulnerable, but Gardner-Webb rises to the challenge. In post-event surveys, participants share a wide range of thoughts. “I was 100 percent sure that I wanted to attend Gardner-Webb before and this visit has just assured me of my decision,” wrote one survey respondent. “This experience moved GWU from just a school I applied to, to the top of my list,” said another. “I was borderline but after the day, I realized that this should be my home for college,” wrote yet another. Overwhelmingly, the feedback is positive and Gardner-Webb gains ground in its quest to enroll many more students than it has scholarships to offer.

Another few weeks will pass before the 2013 Fellows scholarships are announced. In the meantime, the undergraduate admissions office will continue working to recruit excellent candidates for enrollment as they engage students in the GWU “experience” and show them that they can indeed “impact the world” from a small town nestled in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina.

*Located in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb University blends a liberal arts core curriculum with more than 55 specialized major and minor programs, a comprehensive academic experience grounded in a Christian environment of service, leadership, and intellectual freedom.*