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Office of University Communications

December 17, 2012

Honorary Doctorates Given to Randy Marion, Harvey Rogers, and Jack Hunt

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Hundreds of supporters gathered at the Lutz-Yelton Convocation Center on Monday to celebrate the accomplishments of over 300 students as part of the fall commencement ceremony. The University also awarded three honorary doctorates to Randy Marion, Harvey Rogers, and Jack Hunt.

The ceremony for 311 graduates featured commencement speeches by Elisabeth Ann Edmonson of Mooresboro, N.C. (Master of Divinity in Christian Education) and Gary Hudson Smith, IV of Aiken, S.C. (Bachelor of Science in Business Administration). Melinda Lauren McNeely of Charlotte, N.C. (Bachelor of Arts in Missiology) offered the traditional scripture reading.

Edmonson shared memories from her work within the School of Divinity and related the experience to a baptism. “Going from one degree to the next is much like this,” she said. “You feel as though the water is about to clear and you will be able to breathe again when suddenly you are plummeted to the bottom without notice.”

“No matter where we came from or where we are going, all of us will experience the baptism of hardship more than once,” she continued. “Every time that I have felt overwhelmed and suffocated in life, I have learned more about who I am and who the Lord is.”

As a freshman three and a half years ago, Smith said he didn’t know what to expect when he first arrived at Gardner-Webb. “I never believed this moment would come,” he shared in his commencement address. “Now that I am graduating, I can look back and realize that I’ve learned so much. I have made many friends and created many memories in my time here at Gardner-Webb.”

Two students were honored for academic excellence during the ceremony. Crystal Dawn Miller Anderson of Millers Creek, N.C. (Bachelor of Science in Human Services) received the GOAL Senior Scholastic Award. Miriam Elaina Downing of Zachary, La. (Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education and American Sign Language) was honored with the Senior Scholastic Award.

The Most Outstanding Male Graduate Award was given to James Martin Withrow of Ellenboro, N.C. (Bachelor of Arts in Music and Biology). Jessica Marie Greer of Boiling Springs, N.C. (Bachelor of Science in Marketing) was honored with the Most Outstanding

Female Graduate Award.

Honorary Doctorates

Three honorary doctorates were awarded to individuals who embody the ideals of Gardner-Webb University, including caring and Christian service.

Receiving an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters was John Jackson “Jack” Hunt of Lattimore, N.C. and Randall “Randy” L. Marion of Mooresville, N.C. Emmett Harvey Rogers of Mooresville, N.C. received an Honorary Doctorate of Divinity.

Hunt excelled as a dentist, a farmer, an entrepreneur and a statesman of Cleveland County, N.C., always considering service to others as his life’s highest calling. He is a veteran of World War II and the Korean War, having earned the rank of Major in the United States Army. For 22 years, Hunt served as an elected representative in the North Carolina General Assembly, including several terms as Chairman of the House Rules Committee and eventually Speaker Pro-Tempore. With decades of community service and a reputation as a champion of Cleveland County, Hunt has been described as a servant-leader in the truest sense of the word. As his five daughters and their families will attest, he is a family man, a devoted Christian, a proponent of education, and a true advocate for the community in which he lives.

Marion embodies the type of entrepreneurial spirit and professional integrity that Gardner-Webb aspires to instill in its students. With one of the largest retail and fleet sales General Motors dealerships in the nation, Marion has enjoyed many professional accomplishments throughout a lifetime of civic and philanthropic leadership. A friend recently described him as “a man of great vision, with the passion and drive to see those visions through to fruition.” He serves Gardner-Webb as a Trustee and is currently Chairman of the Board for Lake Norman Regional Medical Center, among many other impressive leadership positions at a variety of community agencies. The grandson of a West Virginia Baptist pastor, Marion is also a man of deep spiritual conviction. His wife Betty, his children Randy Jr. and Jennifer Marion Mills and their spouses, and his six grandchildren are the pride and joy of his life.

Rogers was born into the automobile industry and had begun a very promising career as an auto salesman when he sensed a call to ministry. Beyond the traditional age of attending college, Rogers earned his baccalaureate degree at Gardner-Webb and earned both the Master of Divinity and the Doctor of Ministry from Southeastern Theological Seminary. He has pastored three Baptist churches in North Carolina including Forestville, Fallston, and Mooresville, always demonstrating what one friend called “a caring concern for others.” He has served as a board member for Lake Norman Regional Medical Center, North Carolina Baptist Hospital, Baptist Retirement Homes of North Carolina, Mooresville Chamber of Commerce and more. He has held significant leadership positions within the Baptist State

Convention of North Carolina. He has also shown outstanding devotion to his alma mater, teaching as an adjunct professor for Gardner-Webb and serving on the University's Board of Ministers and on the Board of Trustees.

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).