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# Student Development Department Shines within New Tucker Student Center

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Office of University Communications

October 2, 2012

## *Gardner-Webb Students Realize There's More to Tucker Than Meets the Eye*

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—If beauty is only skin deep, then the Tucker Student Center would be nothing more than a lovely jewel created to adorn the Gardner-Webb campus. The visual appeal of the building certainly commands attention; yet upon closer inspection, one discovers that beneath the stunning bricks and mortar pulses an energy that is palpable and a mission that is admirable. Like a gentle giant, the external magnificence of the Center quietly yields to its primary internal role as a venue to help students discover and unleash the University creeds of faith, service and leadership.

When it comes to GWU students, Dr. Dee Hunt is an expert. As vice president and dean of student development, she believes Tucker Student Center is already beginning to transform the overall educational and social atmosphere of the University. The impressive architecture and design will likely be admired for years to come; but it is the overall student experience that will be treasured most by those who make memories there.

“Knowing that in a building, you have people that you need—like a counselor, or information about residence education, or an advisor—it has to be reassuring,” said Hunt. “We have never had this situation in the history of Gardner-Webb. With Tucker, kids can come to one spot—one building—and within 30 minutes get answers to their questions.”

The student development department is one of several university departments to relocate into the new Tucker Student Center. University police, counseling and career services, student leadership, student activities and campus recreation, and residence education—all components within the student development departmental umbrella—can now be found under one roof within the Tucker Student Center. University police will establish a presence there as well, and will staff an officer within Tucker to assist with nighttime security.

One benefit to having departmental services housed together in the same building is simple proximity. “Here, the students come in and need direction or help and I walk them up where they need to go,” said Hunt. “I think they appreciate when people take the time to love on them, to hand carry them right where they need to go. That sends the message that we care. We really do care.”

Teaching students how to be caring, compassionate individuals is another element of the overall GWU experience that is being enhanced within the walls of the Tucker Student Center. The office of community engagement actively works to connect young people with

meaningful service projects both on campus and beyond.

“There are kids born with a serving heart, that want to be that person who makes a difference in someone’s life,” Hunt reflected. “A lot of kids feel that way but don’t know it because they may not have had the chance to experience that. Community engagement is part of the University’s ethos. Faith, service and leadership. You cannot satisfy those tenets if you do not have opportunities for service.”

Being able to easily access the services offered to them is expected to be a valuable asset in the area of student retention. “Once they realize that this building is there for them, that they have a place to go, that this is there for them to soft-land, I believe that will play a part in getting those students to come back year after year,” Hunt shared.

Keeping a positive outlook and staying mentally sharp can sometimes be challenging, particularly when a student is dealing with many changes all at once. The counseling center is available on Tucker’s third floor to help people sort through various emotions and help them get back on the right track. Hunt said she recently helped a student access the counseling service and instead of having to walk across campus, she walked upstairs.

“Previously, if I had the same kid, and told her I wanted her to consider talking to a counselor, by the time I got her over to the counseling center in Washburn, I would have lost her,” she said. “Here in Tucker, I can get that student to the needed service quickly and I think they appreciate that. It is an excellent resource and I know it has saved a lot of kids.”

Other student development services are just as intense, but in a slightly different way. The climbing wall pits its challengers in a head-to-head face off against gravity. As part of the campus recreation office, both expert and novice climbers are in good hands as they scale the wall; many believe the ascent parallels their educational experience. Often, students feel as if they are facing an uphill climb in the area of securing a job after graduation. The career development office is positioned to help assist them in achieving their short-and long-term career goals with soft skills assistance including resume writing, interviewing, and even attaining a coveted internship.

As varied as student needs can be, the Tucker Student Center seems to offer something for everyone. In the area of student activities, student leadership and beyond, Hunt said tremendous positive changes are already being felt. “We can do it all right here,” Hunt explained. “We’ve got everything we need.”

*The Tucker Student Center is a new 110,000 square-foot building for students to fellowship on campus. The facility includes conference rooms, common areas for group and study time, entertainment options featuring a small movie theater and three story climbing wall,*

*restaurants, the campus book store, and over 15 departments. Next week, we will take a closer look at the spiritual development of students through resources offered via the office of Christian Life & Services.*