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GWU Students Experience Political Process Up Close

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Office of University Communications

September 5, 2012

Political Science Students Witness Politics in Action at the DNC

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Gardner-Webb University students are taking advantage of an opportunity to witness the democratic process in action by participating in several events as part of the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte, N.C., held Sept. 4 – 7.

On Tuesday, political science majors and others joined GWU Assistant Professor Dr. Ben Gaskins for the Congressional Black Caucus Institute’s interactive summit “Ufuture – A Summit for Innovative Young Thinkers,” held at Johnson C. Smith University (JCSU). Gardner-Webb was one of 17 colleges and universities represented at the event, which was designed as a forum to provide students a chance to interact with congressional members, White House officials, and other local and regional leaders.

Hundreds of college students gathered at JCSU for the interactive summit, which was moderated by author and actor Hill Harper and award-winning actress Alfre Woodard, among others. Experts included regional and national policymakers, corporate leaders, and non-profit agency representatives. Students were given an opportunity to ask questions via text and Twitter, and were encouraged to offer feedback on issues that will likely affect them upon entering the workforce.

Ivana Hughes is a senior political science major at Gardner-Webb, and she said the summit helped open her eyes to the importance of all aspects of the political process. “Learning that there are over 500,000 African-Americans in North Carolina who are not registered to vote was shocking,” said Hughes. “I will definitely be encouraging everyone to vote, to get their voice out there and change the election.”

Gaskins said that students participating in the summit learned a little more about why it is important to become an involved member of the community. “At Gardner-Webb, we really emphasize participation and engagement,” he said. “I hope our students get inspired whether or not they agree with the president on all of the issues. Just giving them an up-close-and-personal introduction to the political process and the convention process is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.”

Other GWU students are taking part in other facets of the convention week. Nick Carpenter is a Gardner-Webb student who, at 19, is one of the youngest delegates at the convention. He is a sophomore who initially had an interest in athletic training, but after his convention experience, may change his major to political science. As one of five delegates representing the 10th Congressional district, Carpenter is getting a front-row seat at the biggest political

event of the election season. “As a freshman in high school, I helped with some grassroots efforts for the Obama campaign,” he said. “So serving as a delegate at this convention is pretty special to me.”

Regardless of one’s political affiliation, Gaskins encourages all citizens to get involved. “This is about engagement, this is about participation,” Gaskins said. “It’s about finding your belief system, your values, and putting those into who you vote for. If Mitt Romney were here, we’d do the exact same thing. And we would listen to those speeches, hear what they have to say, and use them to inform ourselves and others as well.”

Participation in this event does not represent an affirmation of any partisanship on the part of the University. In order to protect the academic and intellectual freedom of our students, faculty and staff alike, Gardner-Webb does not privilege or endorse any particular political perspective, candidate or party.



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/wbnJoPg-Kb8>