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Study Rates Gardner-Webb's Core Curriculum in the Nation's Top Two Percent

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Office of University Communications

September 2, 2011

GWU Among Only 19 Schools to Earn an "A" in This Year's "What Will They Learn?" Study



BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – Gardner-Webb University's core curriculum ranks in the nation's top two percent for quality and breadth, according to the 2011-2012 *What Will They Learn?* study by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA). The study rated all the major public and private colleges and universities in all 50 states—a total of 1,007 four-year institutions—on an "A" through "F" scale. Gardner-Webb was among only 19 schools—and the only school in the Carolinas—to earn an "A."

Click here to read ACTA's *WWTL?* announcement release.

ACTA argues that for students to gain the knowledge and values necessary for responsible democratic citizenship, they should be required to take the following seven core subjects: composition, U.S. government or history, economics, literature, math, science, and foreign language at an intermediate level. "A"-rated schools require at least six out of the seven core courses, while "B" schools require four or five out of seven. There were 371 schools to earn ACTA's "B" rating, and more than 60% of schools earned a "C" or worse.

"The *What Will They Learn?* study is the only college rating system that focuses 100% on curriculum—not alumni giving or student-teacher ratios. Hundreds of schools across the country are abandoning the core curriculum, but Gardner-Webb is not one of them. And that's exactly what the American people want," said ACTA Press Secretary Daniel Burnett.

A recent nationwide survey conducted for ACTA by the highly respected firm, Roper Public Affairs and Media, found that 70% of Americans believe colleges and universities should require that all students take basic classes in core subjects. That number jumps to 80% in the 25 to 34 year old age group, the segment that, according to ACTA's report, "includes recent college graduates looking for employment and often finding that prospective employers judge their skills to be deficient." ACTA's study proves that Gardner-Webb students, far from deficient, are prepared to excel in a variety of professional fields.

"It is greatly gratifying to receive this affirmation from an outside organization with the prestige of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni," said Gardner-Webb Provost Dr. Ben Leslie. "This recognition is quite simply a recognition of our faculty, who for years have expressed their deep commitment to general education by the ways in which they have

shaped our curriculum. It is encouraging to see that the high value we place on critical subjects like history, mathematics, composition, science, literature and languages has gained recognition in the national arena.”

Gardner-Webb's Associate Provost, Dr. Earl Leininger, also called this recognition “a gratifying affirmation of our University's historic commitment to the values of a liberal arts education,” a tradition he says is “liberating” not only for the knowledge it imparts but for the values and characteristics it cultivates. Gardner-Webb President Dr. Frank Bonner agreed.

“The beauty of our core curriculum,” Bonner said, “lies in its diversity, its versatility. No matter the career field our graduates ultimately choose, their core classes provide the foundational knowledge, attitudes, values, and learning skills to enable them not only to achieve professional success but to lead fulfilled and productive lives as well. That this latest study recognizes the excellent quality of our academic program is truly gratifying.”

ACTA is an independent, non-profit organization committed to academic freedom, excellence, and accountability at America's colleges and universities. According to its website, goacta.org, ACTA is the only organization that works with alumni, donors, trustees, and education leaders across the United States to support liberal arts education, uphold high academic standards, safeguard the free exchange of ideas on campus, and ensure that the next generation receives a philosophically rich, high-quality education at an affordable price.

For more information about this study, visit whatwilltheylearn.com.