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## Gardner-Webb Wrestling joins Southern Conference

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Office of University Communications

June 16, 2011

*The Southern Conference announced Monday that Gardner-Webb University would be one of three universities joining the league as associate members in the sport of wrestling.*

SPARTANBURG, S.C. – Gardner-Webb, Campbell and Southern Illinois-Edwardsville will join the league beginning with the 2011-12 season.

The addition of the three programs, in conjunction with UNC Greensboro's discontinuation of its program following this past season, will bring the Southern Conference's wrestling membership to eight schools.

The move will provide the Runnin' Bulldogs with a chance to compete for a true conference crown for the first time in the program's 22 years.

"This is an excellent opportunity for our wrestling program to gain membership in a conference filled with tradition and excellence in the sport," said Gardner-Webb Vice President for Athletics Chuck Burch. "Each of the eight programs in the league will benefit from each other, providing solid footing in the sport and what should be an outstanding level of competition."

Campbell and Gardner-Webb are full-time members of the Big South Conference, while SIU-Edwardsville competes in the Ohio Valley Conference for the majority of its sports program.

The three new institutions will join with Appalachian State University, The Citadel, Davidson College, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and Virginia Military Institute as the eight schools in the Southern Conference for wrestling.

"The addition of these three programs should help solidify the sport of wrestling in the Southern Conference," said conference commissioner John Iamarino. "We are confident the new members will lead to a more exciting championship and greater opportunities to advance SoCon wrestlers to NCAA postseason competition."

The Southern Conference, which first held a wrestling championship in 1930 and has done so in each season since 1947, will conduct its 75th wrestling championship in Chattanooga, Tenn. next March. The league itself, founded in 1921, is entering its 91st season in 2011-12.