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### Gardner-Webb Alumna Leads Higher Ed Teaching and Learning Center

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ALUMNI

# Gardner-Webb Alumna Leads Higher Ed Teaching and Learning Center

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON SEPTEMBER 14, 2020



## Doctoral Program Studies Opened Doors for Dr. Patricia Fecher, '19

As Dr. Patricia Fecher, of Fayetteville, N.C., faces the current challenges of teaching under COVID-19 regulations, she acknowledges feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. At the same time, however, observing innovative responses from co-workers and students gives her hope. “I think this is probably the most exciting time in my career to be a teacher,” explained the Gardner-Webb University alumna. “We are seeing what the next wave of education is going to be. We get to live it and we get to shape it. There aren’t defined rules. We don’t know what it should look like, sound like, feel like on a day-by-day, hourly basis—that can be a little challenging and stressful. But when you step back and look at it from the big picture, it is amazing to see what these teachers are doing.”

Fecher received her Doctor of Education in Curriculum and Instruction from Gardner-Webb in 2019. While researching her dissertation—Change creates transformation: Transitioning from traditional instructional models to digital age learning models—she received opportunities for professional advancement. “My dissertation began to benefit me before I finished the program,” Fecher affirmed. “I believe that the process by which Gardner-Webb works with candidates to complete their EdD begins to benefit them during course work well before the final defense and committee signatures occur. Doors began to open for me as a result of the knowledge and support I received during course work that finally led to my dissertation.”

While completing her doctoral degree, Fecher transitioned from a K-12 setting into higher education. She accepted a position with Methodist University (MU) in Fayetteville as director of field experience and student teaching. This year, her role expanded to include director of the MU Teaching and Learning Center. “The role of the teaching and learning center is to provide professional learning and pedagogy practices for faculty in higher ed,” Fecher said. “I am very excited. My post-master’s work is in literacy coaching and working with adult learners.”

Additionally, she was one of five faculty members invited to serve in a Digital Learning Work Group for North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (NCICU). The scope of work included planning and co-hosting two digital learning research symposiums as well as using stakeholder input to create an outline of digital learning professional development strategy for faculty in educator preparation programs. “The work of this group directly aligned with my dissertation work,” Fecher shared. “My research was used to support both my work for Gardner-Webb as well as taking a leadership role in the work group.”

“My dissertation began to benefit me before I finished the program.”

Patricia Fecher



Fecher also liked Gardner-Webb’s cohort model and the hybrid course structure of face-to-face and online delivery. “There were six women in my cohort and we really became close,” she affirmed. “The dissertation chair followed you through every semester. The course work aligned with my personal beliefs about education and aligned with some of the work that I was already doing.”

Most importantly, Fecher appreciated GWU’s program design, which prepares educators to work in curriculum development at the school district level. “The coursework that Dr. (Sydney) Brown and Dr. (Jennifer) Putnam put together aligns beautifully with the expectations of curriculum development and working alongside administrators and curriculum specialists,” Fecher asserted.

She has recommended the program to several people, also praising the top-notch faculty. “Every faculty member was giving of their time and their knowledge,” Fecher stated. “They all came with different content areas, which complemented the program. There is a level of humbleness built into the faculty. When my dissertation chair didn’t know the answer to whatever question I asked, she actively sought another faculty member who had expertise in that area. She didn’t try to make me think she knew everything. And, It wasn’t just my dissertation chair; it was true for all the faculty I encountered. They really did build on the strengths of the folks in the department.”

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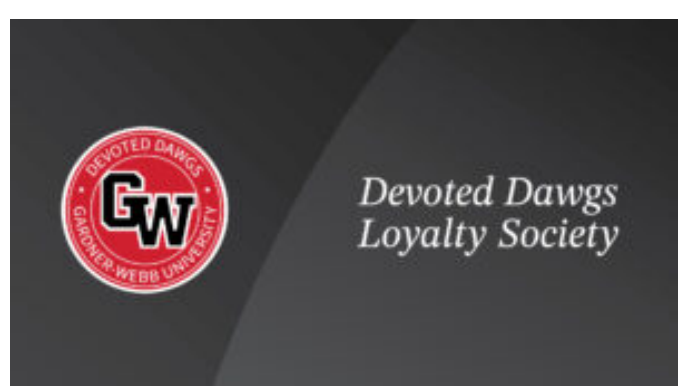
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