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### Former Gardner-Webb Faculty Members Reflect on 10-year Process to Earn Senior College Status

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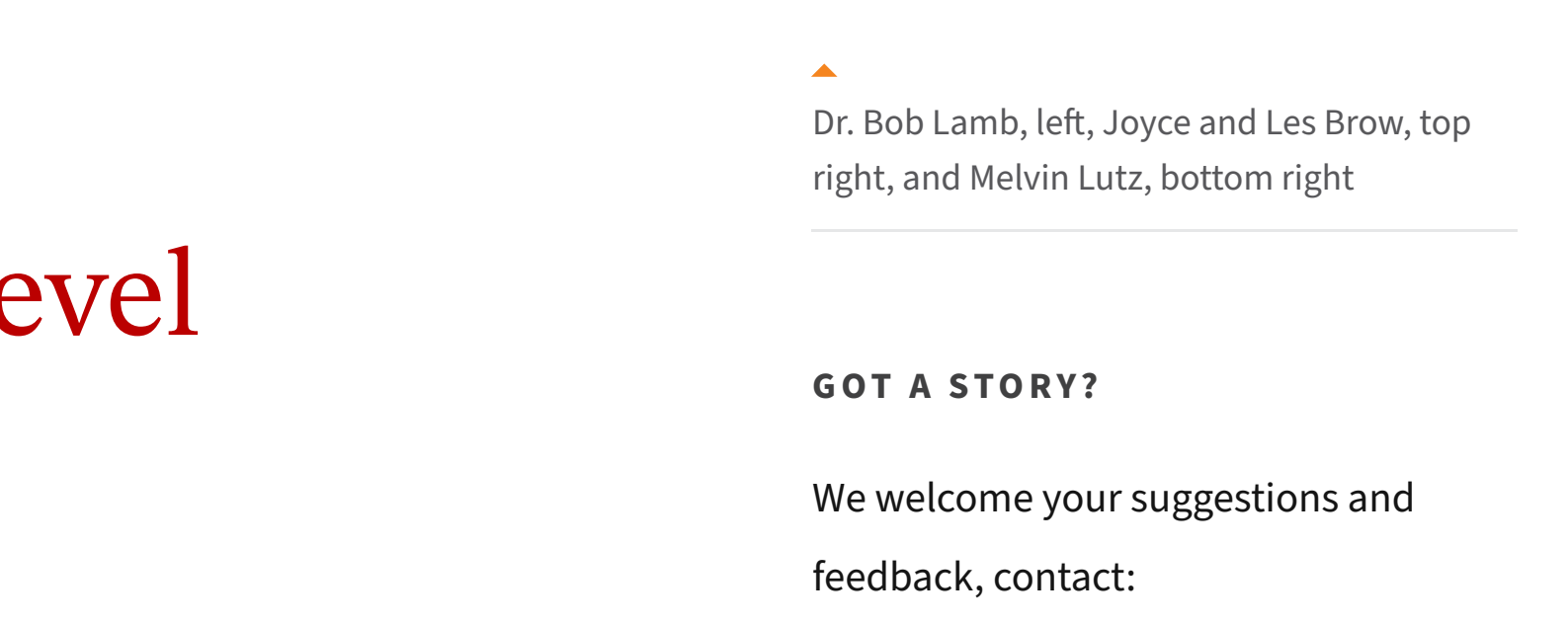
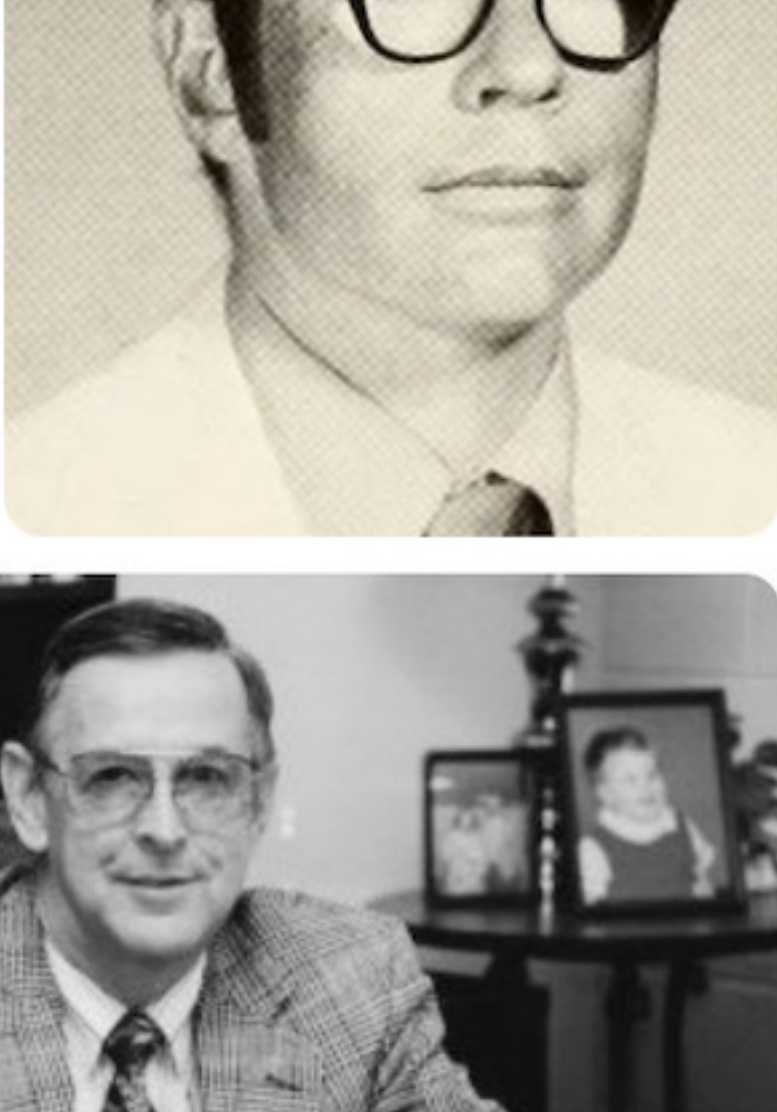
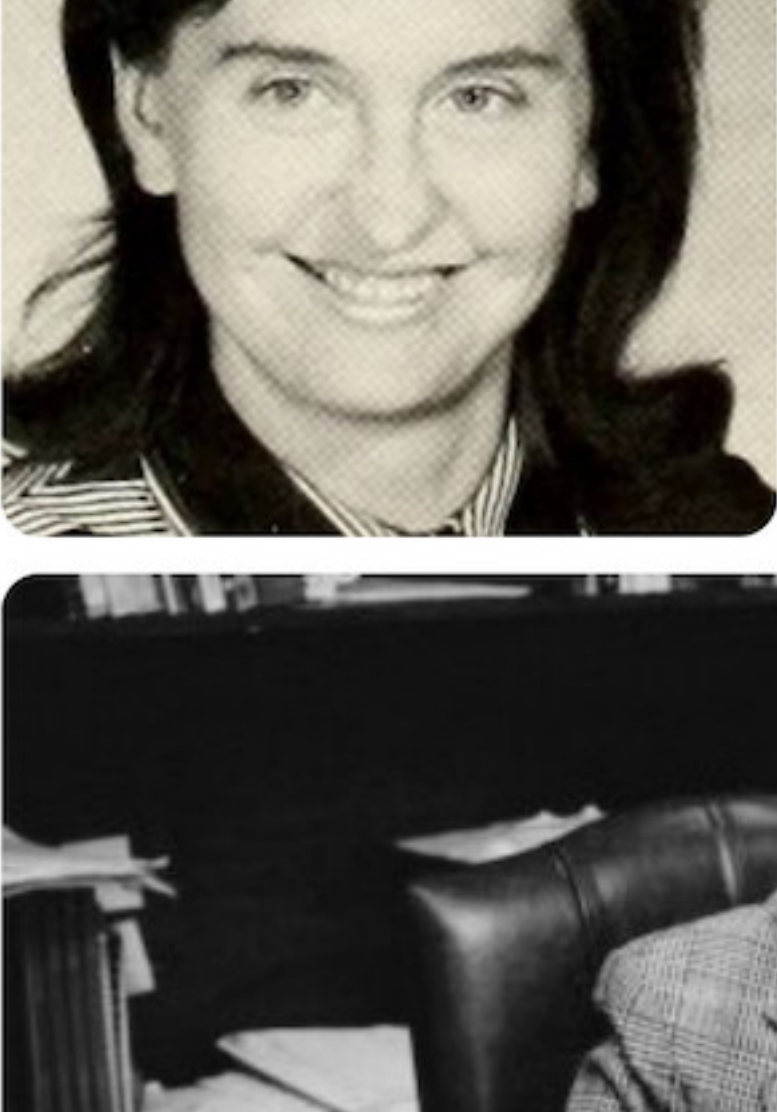
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GWU HISTORY

# Former Gardner-Webb Faculty Members Reflect on 10-year Process to Earn Senior College Status

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON MARCH 24, 2021



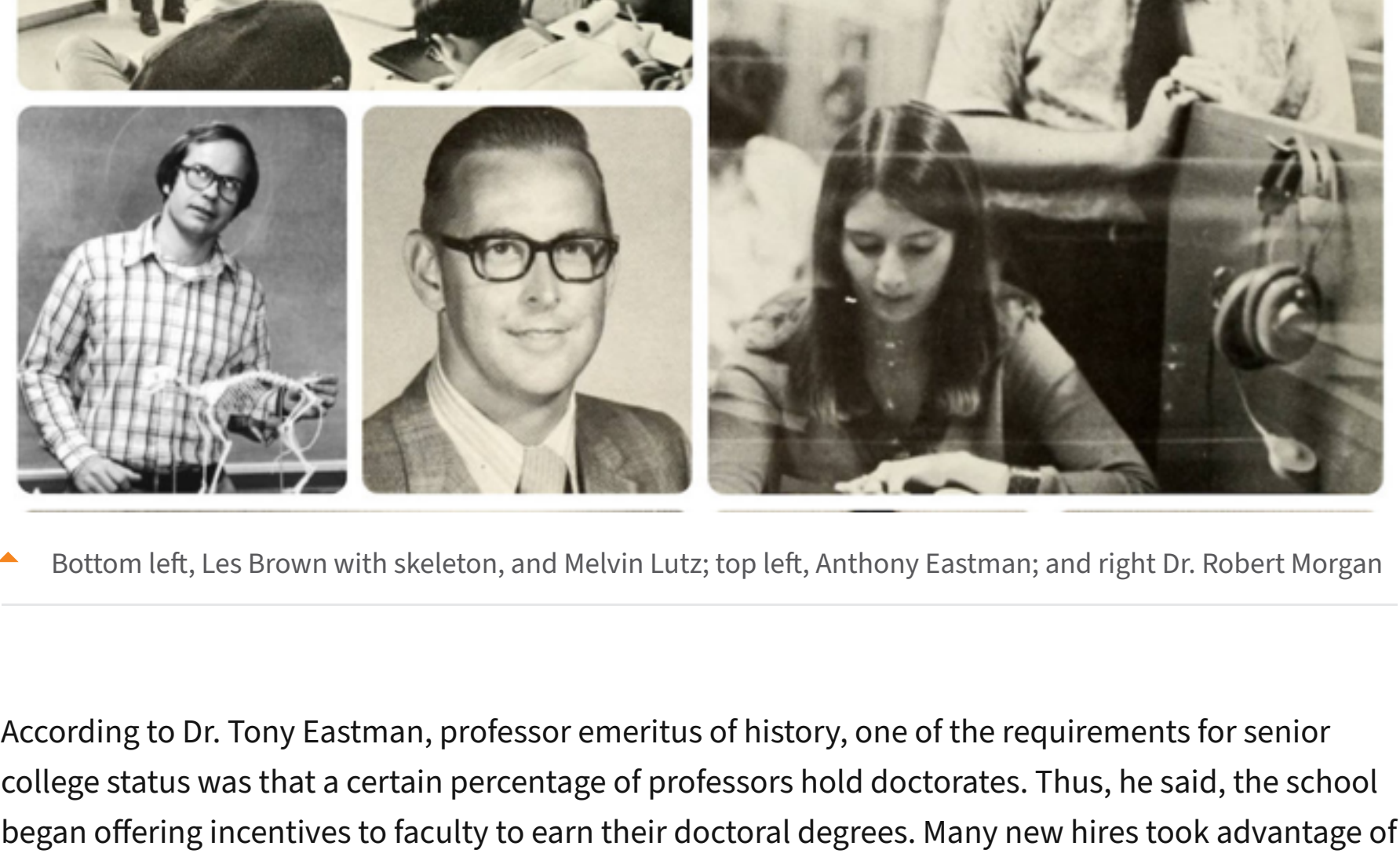
## Professors Discuss Earning Ph.D.'s, Developing Higher-Level Courses, and Expanding Campus

WRITTEN BY: KATHRYN MANNING, '18, BACHELOR OF ARTS IN COMMUNICATION STUDIES AND SPANISH

To our readers: Gardner-Webb University celebrates a historic milestone in 2021—the 50th anniversary of senior college status. Transitioning to a four-year college in 1971 was the result of 10 years of planning and meeting goals. To celebrate this anniversary, Gardner-Webb will publish a series of articles highlighting the stories of former faculty, staff, alumni and supporters who experienced this significant achievement. [View the history timeline here.](#)

Although first conceptualized in 1961, Gardner-Webb's transition from a two-year junior college to a four-year senior college was a decade-long process. Much work had to be done, including the hiring of more highly specialized faculty, the formation of higher-level courses, and the addition of new campus buildings. There were both trials and triumphs during this period.

The transition was met by both apprehension and excitement from current and incoming faculty members. Dr. Robert Morgan, professor emeritus of French and mathematics, began teaching as the first class of four-year students came through. He shared, "I could not have gotten there at a better time. I was so eager to expand further and teach at the senior college level." Dr. Les Brown, professor emeritus of biology, remembered being a new arrival at Gardner-Webb and having some concern about such a massive change. However, he shared, "Dr. [Eugene] Poston [Gardner-Webb President at the time] had done his homework, and his decision was the correct one as we soon learned."

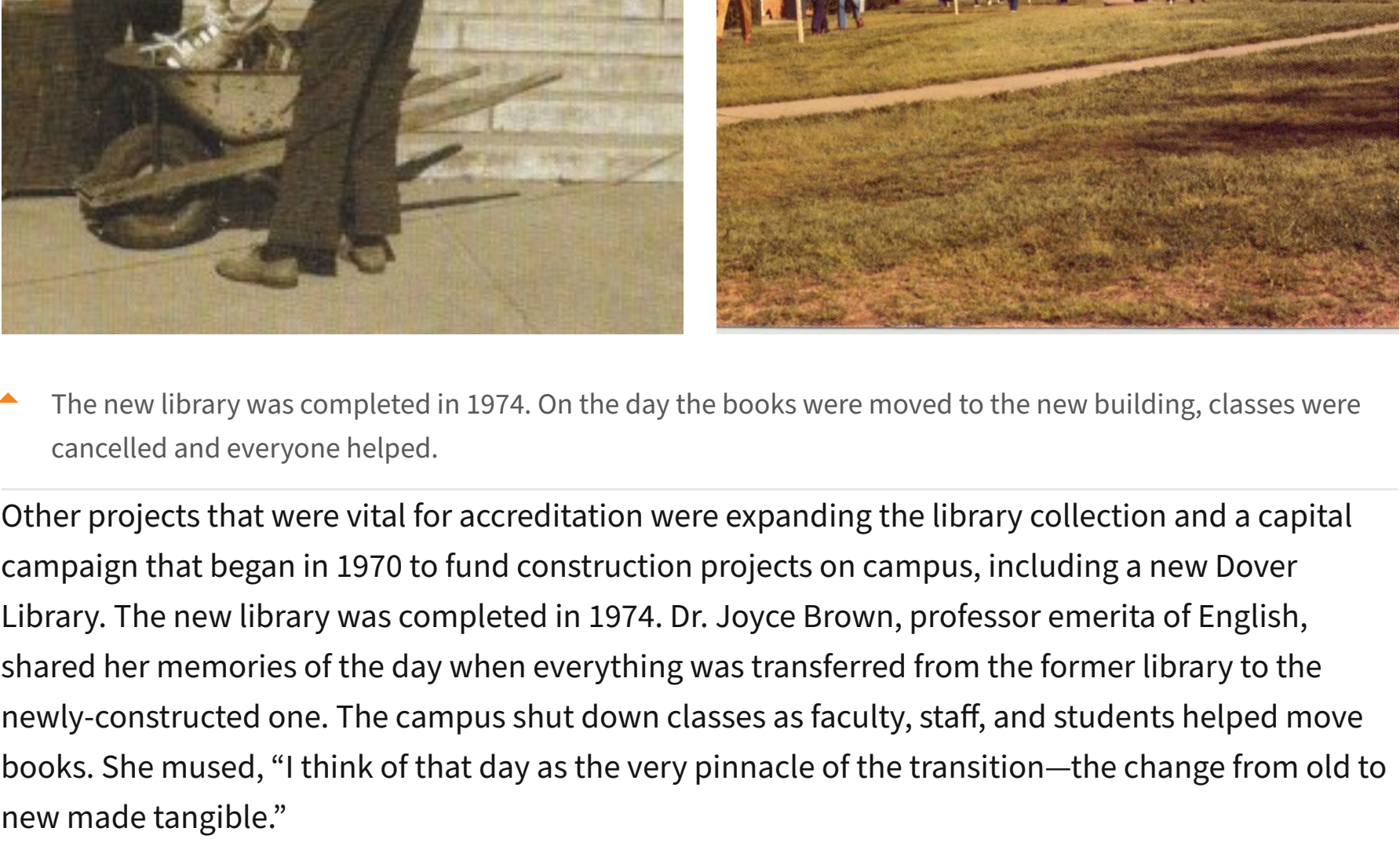


Bottom left, Les Brown with skeleton, and Melvin Lutz; top left, Anthony Eastman; and right Dr. Robert Morgan

According to Dr. Tony Eastman, professor emeritus of history, one of the requirements for senior college status was that a certain percentage of professors hold doctorates. Thus, he said, the school began offering incentives to faculty to earn their doctoral degrees. Many new hires took advantage of this opportunity. Eastman, Morgan, and others would go to another institution to earn their degree, while still receiving a percentage of their Gardner-Webb teaching salary. Per the agreement with the college, they planned to come back and teach at Gardner-Webb for at least five years after receiving their doctorate. Eastman was one of the first people to do this, and said that through this process, Poston was ensuring the future of a four-year institution. Morgan, who ended up teaching for 31 years, joked that the five-year commitment was no problem for him, because he never wanted to leave.

Additionally, senior college accreditation meant that the school would need to expand and reorganize academically. According to Dr. Robert Lamb, dean emeritus of The M. Christopher White School of Divinity, the process included creating a faculty constitution, and faculty members were divided into committees. He mentioned that this allowed faculty, staff, and administration to more fully understand their roles and what was expected of them. Lamb remarked, "Working on committees with old and new faculty from a variety of disciplines was always creative and challenging."

Melvin Lutz, professor of ancient languages who also served Gardner-Webb in other capacities, remembered developing upper-level courses that spanned both the social science and religion departments. He was also responsible for providing documents that defended the importance of these new classes. He said, "My idea was to make the courses not only relevant, but to make them interesting. I wanted to make them exciting as well."



The new library was completed in 1974. On the day the books were moved to the new building, classes were cancelled and everyone helped.

Other projects that were vital for accreditation were expanding the library collection and a capital campaign that began in 1970 to fund construction projects on campus, including a new Dover Library. The new library was completed in 1974. Dr. Joyce Brown, professor emerita of English, shared her memories of the day when everything was transferred from the former library to the newly-constructed one. The campus shut down classes as faculty, staff, and students helped move books. She mused, "I think of that day as the very pinnacle of the transition—the change from old to new made tangible."

Before Gardner-Webb was officially accredited as a senior college in December 1971, the faculty worked to overcome a few other challenges. Les Brown expressed the difficulty of securing funding for lab equipment or science manuals for the library. Eastman spoke to the challenge of determining the effectiveness of the four-year college. He said that it took about seven or eight years for the school to understand the way in which its graduates were fairing post-graduation and thus determining how the school compared to others.

However, there was also plenty of excitement and a notable year in student interest. Lutz reminisced on the excitement of students in that first four-year class in 1971. He shared that they were excited to start in Gardner-Webb as a junior college, but end their undergraduate career there as alumni of a senior college. He also noted the student transfers from area community colleges were pleased to have a local option for a four-year institution.

The work accomplished by Lutz, the Browns, Lamb, Eastman and Morgan helped set the stage for the future, and each went on to serve and teach at Gardner-Webb for 30 years or more. Over the course of the next few months, their individual experiences and reflections on the transition to senior college accreditation will be featured in separate stories.

Other stories in this series:

- [Gardner-Webb Alumni Remember Transition to Senior College Status \(50 years ago\)](#)
- [Gardner-Webb is a Place Where Lasting Friendships are Forged](#)
- [First Theatre Arts Majors Appeared on TV Twice During Four Years](#)
- [Former Gardner-Webb Faculty Members Remember Transition to Four-year College](#)
- [In late 60s, Gardner-Webb Gave Professors, Like Tony Eastman, Incentive to Earn Doctorates](#)
- [Professor Emeritus Came to Gardner-Webb When First Baccalaureate Class Were Freshmen](#)



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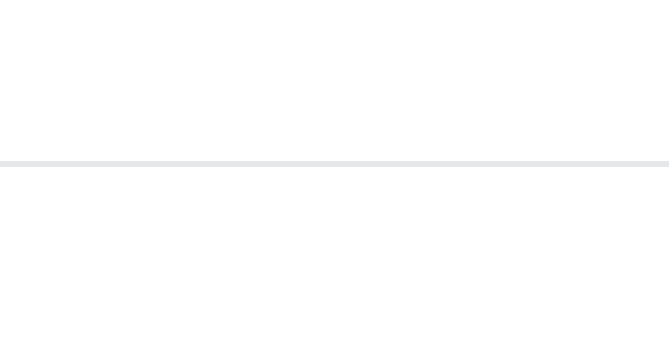


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