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### **In late 60s, Gardner-Webb Gave Professors, Like Tony Eastman, Incentive to Earn Doctorates**

Office of University Communications

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CAMPUS NEWS

# In late 60s, Gardner-Webb Gave Professors, Like Tony Eastman, Incentive to Earn Doctorates

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON MAY 6, 2021



## Program Helped Satisfy Requirements for Accreditation as Senior College

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.](#)

Dr. Tony Eastman, professor emeritus of history, came to Gardner-Webb in 1966 expecting to teach at the junior college level. Not long after his arrival, he began hearing of a possible transition to a four-year college.

He admitted not thinking much about the transition until Dr. Eugene Poston, college president, addressed it and accreditation requirements at a faculty meeting. Eastman said that one of the stipulations for senior college status was that a certain percentage of faculty needed to hold doctorates. He shared that Poston proposed sending faculty to other schools to obtain their doctorates, while they continued to earn a percentage of their teaching salary. In exchange, he said, these professors would commit to returning to Gardner-Webb for at least five years after earning their doctorate.



A major project vital for Gardner-Webb's accreditation as a four-year college was the construction of Dover Library with an expanded collection.

Eastman did not have his doctorate, so he became one of the first ones to apply for the program. He smiled as he thought about the process, and added, "They didn't have a choice; they were stuck with me."

Upon his return to Gardner-Webb, the transition to a four-year college was in full gear, with an additional group of professors out earning their doctorates. Eastman said, "Dr. Poston was growing his own Ph.D.s, which I thought was a fantastic idea for him." He continued, "I felt very much a part of the four-year college, because I realized that I had been able to receive my doctorate because of what Dr. Poston and the Board of Trustees planned."

Eastman shared that another major project vital for accreditation was the construction of the new Dover Library. He remembered that every department on campus was required to bring up-to-date books to the librarian that corresponded to their field. Additionally, he spoke of the reorganization of faculty under committees, as this was another requirement for accreditation. He shared, "every time they asked us [the faculty] to do something, we did it, and we did it well." He added, "there was a spirit there that we're launching out onto something that we don't know the first thing about, but it was exciting, and we thought we could do the job and do it right."

He remembered working within his department to develop upper-level courses, which he said was fairly simple for most, because each department had a good idea of how they wanted to structure things. However, he remembered several disagreements between different departments regarding the core curriculum, such as coming to a conclusion on how many courses in particular disciplines should be required for students to take.



Photos from Dr. Tony Eastman's over 40 years at Gardner-Webb. Before he retired in 2011, Eastman delivered his last lecture (photo at top right), which was streamed over the internet. In the bottom photo at right, Eastman was honored for his service to the University in 2012 with the planting of a White Ash tree behind the social science building, Frank Nanney Hall.

Eastman also shared that creating a statement of purpose was important for ensuring that Gardner-Webb was set apart from other four-year schools. He shared, "We emphasized in our statement of purpose that Christian[ity] and academics are the same and that we were going to embark on Christian higher education." Eastman said the faculty agreed that Christianity would be taught or mentioned in each class.

Eastman remembered working closely with Tom McGraw, vice president of Gardner-Webb and chief assistant to the president. He shared that McGraw ensured that everything was correct as it was sent to the accrediting body, describing McGraw's efforts as "herculean." He remembered McGraw playing devil's advocate, assuring that each plan was solid. "He was so down to earth...pragmatic through this whole thing," Eastman added. Furthermore, Eastman acknowledged that McGraw and Poston worked very well together, and Poston's confidence guided the whole process. "Dr. Poston never showed any doubt that this thing was going to be done, that he had assembled the faculty he wanted; he had assembled the administration and administrators that he needed; and his optimism helped tremendously," Eastman stated.

Eastman went on to work at Gardner-Webb for over 40 years, witnessing the transformation and advancements of the school from a two-year junior college to a four-year senior college to eventually a university designation. Over the course of the next few months, we will continue to feature the experiences of individual faculty members as they helped Gardner-Webb achieve the transition to senior college accreditation.

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](#)
- [Professor Emeritus Came to Gardner-Webb When First Baccalaureate Class Were Freshmen](#)

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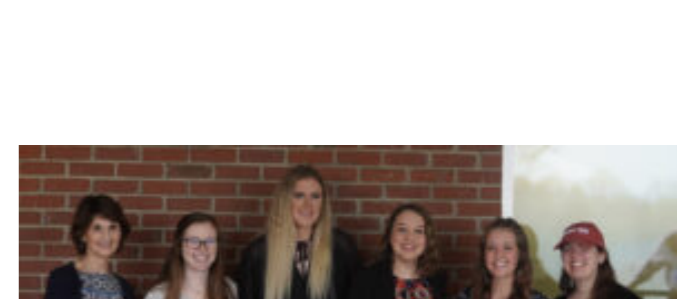
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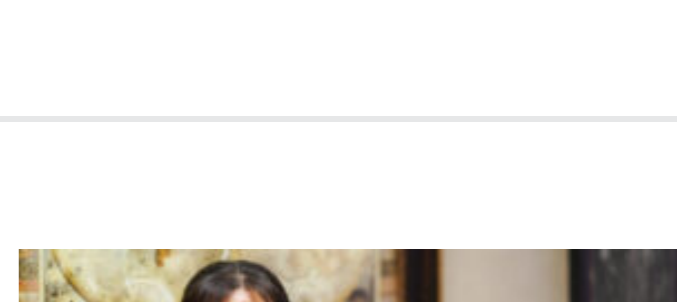


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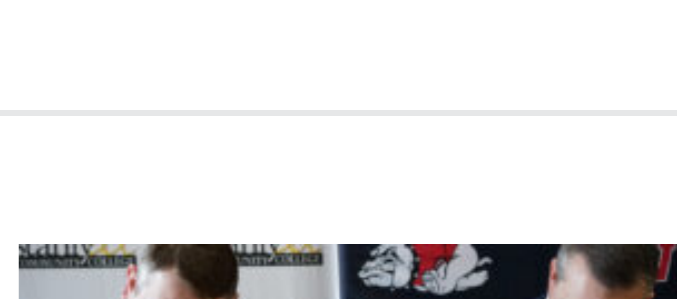


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