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GWU Doctoral Student Applies Studies to His Job in Public Administration

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GRADUATE PROGRAMS

GWU Doctoral Student Applies Studies to His Job in Public Administration

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON DECEMBER 7, 2020



David L. Williams, '22, Enhances Leadership Skills and Gains Research Experience

David L. Williams, a student in the Gardner-Webb University Doctor of Education in Organization Leadership (DEOL) program, has more than two decades of experience in public administration. He wanted to earn his doctorate for a couple of reasons. Besides enhancing his leadership skills, Williams wanted an opportunity to gain research experience, because he hopes to teach college when he retires from his current position.

"I chose the Gardner-Webb program because of the experience and knowledge of the professors, and the required doctoral project is real-time experience to prepare you for life after completing the program," he noted. "I value the comprehensive nature of the classes and program emphasis. The professors have been very supportive and are extremely knowledgeable."



David L. Williams has worked in public administration for more than two decades. He is a student in the Gardner-Webb University Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership program.

Halfway through the 63-hour program, Williams is already applying what he's learning in his job as community affairs and development administrator in the Gaston County, N.C., Manager's Office. He came into this position in August 2020. His role is to provide leadership with countywide visioning; conduct organizational strategic planning; work with area city/town managers with intergovernmental relations, intergovernmental policies and inter-local agreements; and to serve as a liaison between minority communities/groups and representatives from community engagement relations within county government.

"I have a strong interest in how organizations and leadership come together or intersect, and influence local and state public policy," Williams said. He's worked for Gaston County for 24 years—as community development administrator from 1996 to 2006 and planning director from 2006 to 2020. Before that, he worked for the city of Shelby, N.C. His bachelor's and master's degrees are in public administration. He has a certification from the American Institute of Certified Planners and is an Economic Development Finance Professional.

Gardner-Webb's DEOL program has validated his own experiences, as well as provided insight into other aspects of his job. Leadership assessments have helped him to understand his characteristics and more effectively supervise his staff. "It has been an eye-opener for me," he expressed. "Some things I wished I had known. So much that you learn is so enriching. It's a lot of new things that you can employ and apply."

His doctoral project is "The Arduous Pursuit of Ratification: Why A Community Effort Towards Adopting County-wide Zoning can Aid in Economic Development Opportunity." He has completed the literature review and is set to begin his research. "I have learned a tremendous amount, specifically about leadership skill development and application," Williams shared. "I have thoroughly enjoyed the program, my professors, and my cohort. The cohort has allowed my classmates and me to become closer and to learn from each other, as well as support each other through the process. The small group setting is also a plus to the learning environment. In addition, the flexible and supportive nature of the program has allowed me to work towards my doctorate without sacrificing time with my wife and three daughters."

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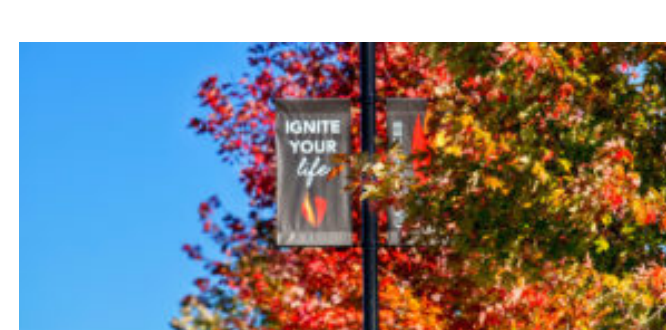


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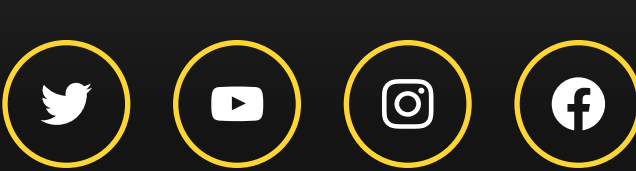
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