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**NATIONAL INTEREST**

## Webb Connections Informative Series Returns to Gardner-Webb on Sept. 23

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON SEPTEMBER 2, 2021



Hosted by President Dr. William M. Downs, Topic of First Event is Future of College Athletics



▲ GWU President Dr. William M. Downs

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—The Supreme Court ruled in June that the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) cannot limit education-related benefits offered to student-athletes. How will this ruling impact college sports? Local and regional experts representing Gardner-Webb University, the Big South and media, will discuss possible outcomes of the court's decision during the first Webb Connections program of the Fall 2021 Semester.

Hosted by Gardner-Webb University President Dr. William M. Downs, the discussion—"The Supreme Court, the NCAA and the Future for College Athletics"—will be held Sept. 23 at 7 p.m. in Stewart Hall of Tucker Student Center. The program is open to the public.

The panelists include:

- **Kyle Kallander, Big South Commissioner**—In his 26th year as Big South Conference Commissioner, Kallander has seen year-to-year growth in marketing and television, an enhanced digital presence as well as unparalleled success on the field and in the classroom. He also saw a Big South-record 13 student-athletes achieve Academic All-America status in 2003-04 and 2013-14. He led the creation of the Big South Academic Consortium of Big South Chief Academic Officers and Faculty Athletics Representatives to develop shared academic programs and resources among member institutions.
- **Kelli Bartik, Sports Anchor, WCCB Charlotte and a GW alumna**—Bartik brings the latest from the world of sports throughout the week on WCCB TV News at 10 and co-hosts Got Game with Brandon Davidow on Sunday nights at 10:30. She joined the WCCB Charlotte team in October 2003 as a news reporter, but quickly made her way to the sports department. She graduated from Gardner-Webb with a bachelor's degree in communication and a Spanish minor.



▲ Kelli Bartik



▲ Kyle Kallander

- **Alex Simmons, Head Coach, GW Women's Basketball**—Simmons enters her fourth season as the head coach of the Gardner-Webb women's basketball program in 2021-22. She led the Runnin' Bulldogs to an 18-11 overall record and 13-7 in Big South Conference play in 2019-20, finishing fifth in the league standings. Gardner-Webb was Simmons first head coaching job after assistant coaching stints at Ole Miss (2013-2018) and Middle Tennessee State (2010-2013). Simmons played for legendary University of Tennessee Coach Pat Summit, winning two NCAA championships (2007, 2008) in three Final Four appearances.
- **Jim Chester, Head Coach, GW Baseball**—Chester is in his second year as the head coach of the Gardner-Webb baseball team after taking over the program in June 2019. In 2020, Chester led the Runnin' Bulldogs to an 8-8 record before the season was halted due to COVID-19. In 2020, Chester led the Runnin' Bulldogs to an 8-8 record in his first COVID-shortened season, following up that debut in 2021 with a strong 29-23 campaign (27-13 in Big South) and earning Co-Coach of the Year

honors in the conference. In his second season, Chester mentored star pitcher Mason Miller, an eventual third-round pick by the MLB's Oakland Athletics.

- **Anna Marie Fish, GW Soccer player and president of Student-Athlete Advisory Committee (SAAC)**—A native of Lillington, N.C., Fish graduated from Wake Christian Academy. She is a biology major with a minor in Spanish. She also serves as a senior class senator in the Student Government Association. Fish started in the eight games played in spring 2021 and logged a total of 737 minutes on the pitch.



▲ Anna Fish



▲ GWU Head Women's Basketball Coach Alex Simmons



▲ GWU Head Baseball Coach Jim Chester



▲ Steve Serck

- **Steve Serck, Gardner-Webb University Counsel**—Serck came Gardner-Webb from East Carolina University (Greenville, North Carolina) where he provided direction on state and federal laws and training in all aspects of faculty, staff and employment issues. Gardner-Webb's first in-house legal

counsel, Serck holds a Bachelor of Arts in political science from the University of Northern Iowa, and a Juris Doctor from the University of Iowa College of Law.

***Auxiliary aids will be made available to persons with disabilities upon request 48 hours prior to the event. Please call 704-406-2155 or email [disabilityservices@gardner-webb.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@gardner-webb.edu) with your request.***

*Located in the North Carolina foothills, Gardner-Webb University is a private, Christian, liberal arts university. Gardner-Webb emphasizes a strong student-centered experience and rigorous academics to prepare students to become effective leaders within the global community. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.*