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GRADUATE PROGRAMS

GWU Doctoral Student Recognized for his Commitment to Advancing Social Justice

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON NOVEMBER 11, 2021



L. Jameco McKenzie Named Distinguished Young Alumni at Undergraduate Alma Mater

A doctoral student in the College of Education at Gardner-Webb University has been honored by his undergraduate alma mater. L. Jameco McKenzie is a 2021 Distinguished Young Alumni (<https://www.methodist.edu/alumni/awards/>) for Methodist University (MU) in Fayetteville, N.C. A 2015 graduate of MU, McKenzie serves as a residential life coordinator for North Carolina State University (NCSU) in Raleigh and is pursuing a Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership (DEOL) from GWU. He was recognized for his commitment to advancing social justice within and beyond higher education and student affairs.

“Receiving this award reminded me that people are always watching and while I do not do social justice work for recognition, it is a good feeling to be seen and feel empowered for the work that one does,” McKenzie reflected. “I am also reminded of the words of Maya Angelou, ‘When you learn, teach. When you get, give.’ I will use this moment in time to propel me to do more to make our society more just, equitable, and inclusive for the next generation.”

McKenzie is a Caribbean student affairs educator from Nassau, The Bahamas. At NCSU, he works primarily with first-year students and has provided programmatic support and leadership to the identity-based living and learning communities—Native Space Village and The Black Male Initiative. McKenzie is also the advisor of the NCSU Caribbean Student Association; co-teaches “Leadership in Africana Studies” and “Foundations of Cultural Competence”; and serves as a staff senator for NCSU’s Division of Academic and Student Affairs.



A second-year doctoral student at GWU, McKenzie's research is focused on developing strategies to embolden the services, offerings and activities of the African American Cultural Center at NCSU. "The scholar-practitioner lens is what I enjoy most about my learning at GWU," McKenzie stated. "Being in the (DEOL) program has helped me sharpen my skills in leading others. It has empowered me to use the various theories and assessments we learn in the classroom and transition them into practice with the college students I work with."

Ultimately, McKenzie hopes to serve as a justice, equity, and inclusion consultant for universities and cooperate organizations. "Through my action research project in the DEOL program, I have developed strong strategies, practices, and skills to help make this goal come true as I am partnering with NC State African American Cultural Center to develop a comprehensive community engagement plan that would help them become an even more premiere Black Cultural Center," McKenzie affirmed.

He earned a bachelor's degree in mass communications from MU, a Master of Education in Higher Education-Student Affairs from Salem State University in Massachusetts, and completed a graduate certificate in Counselor Education at NCSU. He is working on a graduate certificate in Anti-Racism in Urban Education at UNC-Charlotte.

His involvement in youth leadership, advocacy, and student development began in 2011. He is a charter member of The Rho Zeta chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc. He has worked at several universities across the east coast in leadership roles, primarily in student housing and diversity/multicultural affairs. Outside of his formal higher education roles, he regularly contributes to "Operation G.R.A.D.'s journal—The Educated Mentor." He is passionate about mentorship and supports graduate students and new professionals through one-on-one mentoring and career development.

In spring 2021, he was recognized in the inaugural ACPA Pan African Network 30 under 40 for his work in mentorship. The Pan African Network (PAN) is one of four Networks within the Coalition on Multicultural Affairs (CMA) of the American College Personnel Association (ACPA). In 2018, McKenzie received the Salem State Martin Luther King Jr. Leadership Award for his commitment and impact on the university community in justice, peace, and equity. He was also awarded the Higher Education Student Affairs Diversity, Inclusion & Social Justice Award for his advocacy, leadership, and mentorship to "The Brotherhood—A Men of Color Initiative" at Salem State.

Gardner-Webb University is North Carolina's recognized leader in private, Christian higher education. A Carnegie-Classified Doctoral/Professional University, GWU is home to six professional schools, 14 academic departments, more than 80 undergraduate and graduate majors, and a world-class faculty. Located on a beautiful 225-acre campus in Boiling Springs, N.C., Gardner-Webb prepares graduates to impact their chosen professions, equips them with the skills to advance the frontiers of knowledge, and inspires them to make a positive and lasting difference in the lives of others. Ignite your future at Gardner-Webb.edu.