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CAMPUS NEWS

Gardner-Webb's November Webb Connections Honors Military and Their Families

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON NOVEMBER 26, 2021

▲ From left, Gardner-Webb President Dr. William Downs interviews the panel, Rear Admiral Terry Eddinger, Darlene Johnson Gravett, Joseph Hough and Brittany Sherrod.

President Dr. William Downs Interviews Distinguished Panel About Their Service and Experiences

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—While November is a month of thanksgiving, it's also a month to recognize and honor the nation's military members, veterans and their families for answering the call to serve. To recognize and honor the contributions and sacrifices of these dedicated individuals, Gardner-Webb University's Webb Connections program on Nov. 18 focused on "Gardner-Webb and the Military Experience." Hosted by GWU President Dr. William Downs, the video of the panel discussion premieres Nov. 26 at 5 p.m. on GWU's [YouTube channel \(https://www.youtube.com/user/gardnerwebb1905\)](https://www.youtube.com/user/gardnerwebb1905) and [Facebook page \(https://www.facebook.com/gardnerwebb\)](https://www.facebook.com/gardnerwebb) and is available below.

In his opening remarks, Downs stated the purpose of the evening. "As a University, we are extremely proud of the veterans who join us each and every semester to pursue their academic degrees and to realize their professional dreams," he said. "One goal of tonight's discussion is to identify ways that institutions of higher education, such as our own, can do more to support this important group of non-traditional students."

Downs also listed other goals of the evening, such as discussing ways to grow the ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Corps) program on the Gardner-Webb campus, listing any barriers to success that veterans may face, and addressing the intersection of faith and military service.



- ▲ Gardner-Webb President Dr. William Downs, center, poses with the panelists, from left, Joseph Hough, Brittany Sherrod, Darlene Gravett and Rear Admiral Terry Eddinger.

The panelists included:

- Rear Admiral Terry Eddinger, of Winston-Salem, N.C., the highest-ranking Navy Reserve chaplain.
- Brittany Sherrod, of Simpsonville, Ky., a sophomore homeland security major at GWU, ROTC cadet and women's lacrosse player.
- Joseph Hough, retired Army Lieutenant Colonel, having served 32 years with the North Carolina National Guard and an assistant superintendent for Buncombe County Schools in Asheville, N.C.
- Darlene Johnson Gravett, of Boiling Springs, the daughter of an Army master sergeant, wife of an Army officer, and retired from Gardner-Webb, where she was the University's first female member of the senior staff and was honored as associate provost emerita.

During the conversation, Eddinger, Sherrod and Hough talked about the community at Gardner-Webb, where professors encourage students and inspire them to think creatively. "I feel Gardner-Webb has opened doors and is unique in giving me opportunities," Sherrod affirmed. "At a bigger school, I feel like I would just be a number there, not only in the classroom, but in the ROTC program. Being in the ROTC program here, you get more one-on-one instruction, and if you mess up, it is corrected, which is helpful and teaches you life lessons for the future. Playing a sport as well gives me the opportunity to use the skills I learn in ROTC for the team, like leadership or how to bring the team together, because it's not one person, (the team) has to work together."

Gravett spoke about the enriching experiences and lessons she learned from military life, like flexibility and adaptability, and how what she learned helped her as a professor and administrator at Gardner-Webb. Eddinger and Hough also talked about the many benefits of serving in the military and the extraordinary opportunities they have had through their service.



▲ Cadet Brittany Sherrod's lacrosse teammates and other ROTC cadets came to the event to show support.

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.