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**ADMISSIONS**

## Meet Kylee Morris, of Newport, N.C., Third Tucker Scholar at Gardner-Webb

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON FEBRUARY 22, 2022



### Multi-Talented Student-Athlete Known for her Servant Attitude in Basketball, Marching Band and Church

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—In the Gospel of Mark 12:29-31, Jesus gives the two most important commandments: “Love the Lord Your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength; and love your neighbor as yourself.” These verses form the foundation for Gardner-Webb University’s most prestigious award, the Tucker Heart, Soul, Mind and Strength Scholarship. This year’s winner, Kylee Morris of Newport, N.C. (<https://gardner-webb.edu/news/gwu-names-third-tucker-scholar/>), embodies all of these qualities in her interactions on the basketball court, at school and in the community.

Morris’ coach at West Carteret High School and a history teacher, Lindsey Howell, explained how Morris demonstrated the heart of a servant in her scholarship recommendation. Morris gave up her spot on the Varsity team, so that the Junior Varsity (JV) basketball team could field a squad.

“In my career as a coach, I have had three young women who have stood out as true leaders,” praised Howell, who has more than 15 years of experience. “Kylee Morris is one of the ladies in this exclusive group of standouts. She earned the respect of her teammates when she volunteered to stay down on the JV team. Truly, the choice was up to her, and I was so blown away by her response that I saved it and present part of it here: ‘Even though I would love with all my heart to be on the varsity team, I would feel guilty for the rest of my life if I didn’t give the freshmen a chance to experience high school basketball (a lot has been taken from them already).’”



Because of this story and others, Morris rose to the top of 20 finalists who came to interview for the scholarship. The Tucker Scholarship was established in 2019 by Carolyn and Robert Tucker, longtime University benefactors. The winner receives an eight-semester full-tuition, room and board scholarship. The Tuckers are the founders and owners of Shoe Show Inc. in Concord, N.C. In 2010, they gave the University \$5.5 million to build the Tucker Student Center. In the past, Mrs. Tucker explained that Mark 12:29-31 is her life prayer for her family. To remind her children and their spouses, her grandchildren and future Tucker generations of her request, Mrs. Tucker gave them plaques inscribed with the scripture. Replicas of the plaques also hang at entrances to every building on the GWU campus.

Morris not only exemplifies the heart, soul, and strength characteristics of the Tucker Scholarship, she also meets the “mind” requirements through her exemplary academic record. She achieved Academic Honors Awards in grades nine and 10 and anticipates receiving the four-year award as a senior. She is also the recipient of two awards for outstanding achievement on PSAT score. She participated in the Chick-fil-A Leadership Academy in 2020-2021 and was inducted into the National Honor Society in the 11th grade.



Morris said staying on the JV team enriched her high school experience. “I was able to bond with some of the sweetest girls who continue to look up to me even after the JV season has ended,” she related. “It has taught me to continue to be selfless and to stay open-minded to other opportunities. As of right

now, our varsity girls team is undefeated in our conference and has taken first place overall. We are starting the playoff games very soon.”

In addition, Morris also plays softball and is a member of the Marching Patriots band, serving as section coordinator in 2020-2021 and Percussion Captain in 2021-2022. She also plays with the Carteret Collective Sound, a local community band, and was Principal Musician and Equipment Captain for the 2021 fall season. Morris plays “mallets” in the percussion section—the bells, xylophone and marimba. For three years, she has received both county and All-State honors for her playing abilities.

At Community Baptist Church in Newport, she participated in hurricane relief service projects for residents of the North Carolina in 2018 and 2019. She’s also been involved in food drives and supported missionaries both monetarily and with item-specific drives.



Her youth pastor, Matthew Epperson, and his wife, Jennifer, commended her for her service to the church and devotion to God. “I have seen her heart and soul in her love for God as she soaks up the sermons at church ... and I see it in her desire to serve God and do what’s right,” Jennifer described. “And she manages to do that in a world where doing the right thing is increasingly unpopular among young people.”

Morris plans to major in biology at GWU and her goal is to enter the medical field. “I have always had an internal desire to make an impact on people’s lives,” Morris said. “Losing family members throughout high school truly increased my yearning to save lives through medicine. These younger passions of mine motivated me to major in biology.”

She chose Gardner-Webb because the University had everything she wanted in a school. “I desired a place that prioritized personal relationships, academic studies, and religious faith,” she explained. “I also wanted a place that I could pursue my love for music without having to minor in courses. Gardner-Webb has all of those things. The 13-to-1 student ratio really blew my mind, and the desire for the students there to succeed was written all over the home page. After touring, I knew for certain that Gardner-Webb was the place that felt like home.”

**Find out more about scholarship opportunities at Gardner-Webb.**

*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.*