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Recommended Citation

Office of University Communications, "Gardner-Webb Announces Lawrence Brinson as New Director of Diversity and Inclusion" (2022). *Gardner-Webb NewsCenter Archive*. 2427.
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DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Gardner-Webb Announces Lawrence Brinson as New Director of Diversity and Inclusion

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON MARCH 11, 2022



Chosen After a Nationwide Search, Brinson Brings Over 20 Years of Experience as an Educator and Leader



▲ Lawrence Brinson

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Gardner-Webb University officials have announced that Lawrence Brinson has accepted the position of Director of Diversity and Inclusion. Brinson, of Huntersville, N.C., was chosen after a nationwide search and will begin his new role on April 4.

He reports directly to Vice President for Student Development and Dean of Students Lesley Villarose, who noted that Brinson’s two decades of achievements in the areas of equity and diversity made him the perfect choice. “The Director of Diversity and Inclusion is a very important leadership position for

the University community,” she stated. “We are fortunate to have found someone as talented, accomplished and dedicated as Lawrence, who brings to Gardner-Webb over 20 years of professional experience working in the field of diversity and inclusion.”

Brinson’s various professional positions include Education Policy and Practice Facilitator with the National Education Association (NEA), Instructional Specialist with Discovery Education, K-12 educator with Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools, Youth Services Coordinator with the Charlotte Housing Authority, and Program Manager with the Salvation Army of Mecklenburg County. In all of these roles, he implemented initiatives that promoted diverse and inclusive communities.

“Gardner-Webb’s student body is populated by an increasingly diverse mosaic of backgrounds, reflecting the dynamics of our broader American society,” noted GWU President William Downs. “In the United States, our country’s motto (*E pluribus unum*—‘out of many, one’) speaks directly to the importance of finding unity in diversity. Here at Gardner-Webb, we affirm our mission as one that serves God and Humanity (*Pro Deo et Humanitate*), and by that we mean all humanity. I’m grateful to have Lawrence Brinson join us in this essential mission.”

At Gardner-Webb, some of Brinson’s responsibilities include providing strategic vision and leadership for University initiatives that will strengthen campus unity and enhance respect for diversity in its many forms. He will engage students, faculty and staff to further behaviors, attitudes and policies that support diversity, equity and inclusion on campus. He will also lead the identification, planning and implementation of educational programming and training to create a more diverse, equitable and inclusive University community.

Brinson expressed his excitement over joining the GWU community and getting to know the people of Boiling Springs. “It is an honor to be selected to lead the diversity and inclusion efforts at Gardner-Webb,” he asserted. “My goal is to bring to the forefront a community-developed vision for diversity and inclusion ensuring that all members of the Gardner-Webb community feel valued. I will work to build strong relationships based upon trust, transparency, and honesty in order to move this meaningful work forward.”

Since 2006, Brinson has taught social studies and Achievement Via Individual Determination (AVID) with Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools. In addition to teaching courses in social studies, public history and contemporary law and justice with an emphasis on African American History and Culture, he is an advisor for the Minority Achievement Club, the Multicultural Club and Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE) Club. He also works with Upward Bound, a program that strives to increase the rate at which students complete secondary education and enroll in and graduate from institutions of postsecondary education.

For the past seven years, Brinson has also contracted to work as the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Facilitator for the NEA Education Policy and Practice center. As a member of the senior management team, he has led the strategic vision, planning and implementation of DEI initiatives. A

highlight of his career was working with the Human and Civil Rights Department and the Office of Strategic Alliances, to develop the “Leaders for Just Schools” (LJS) program. This initiative works to create learning environments that respect and celebrate diversity, foster equity for all students, and strengthen cultural competence.

He also developed a five-year, first-of-its-kind plan with diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals for administrators and educators from various school districts across the United States. Brinson founded the Instruction and Professional Development Academy (IPDA), which develops action programs that work with educators in one-on-one settings to provide guidance and focus on practical DEI strategies to increase student engagement and learning. He also led the first partnership of 20 service organizations taking concrete steps to address inequity using plans from the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

A native of North Carolina, Brinson has a bachelor’s degree from Johnson C. Smith University in economics with a minor in business administration. Additionally, he attended Shaw University School of Divinity from 1999 to 2001. He and his wife, Patricia, have been married 24 years, and they have three children.

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.