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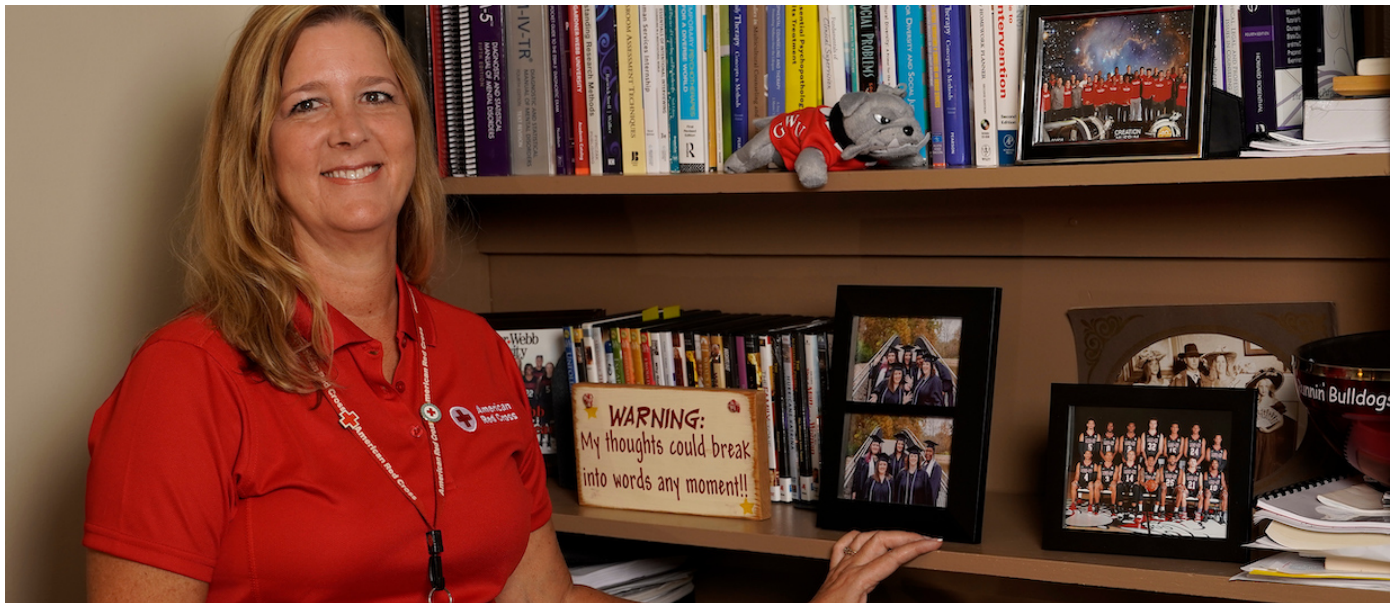
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ACADEMICS

Gardner-Webb President Downs Appoints New Faculty Athletic Representative

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON MARCH 30, 2022



Dr. Sharon Webb will Fill NCAA-Mandated Position to Advocate and Support Student-Athletes

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Gardner-Webb President William Downs recently announced the appointment of Dr. Sharon Webb as the new Faculty Athletic Representative (FAR). A professor in the School of Psychological Science and Counselor Education, Webb succeeds Dr. Chris Davis, who has served since 2009. This position, mandated by the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), is appointed by and reports directly to the president.

The duties of the FAR are to support the NCAA Division I philosophy, especially to establish and maintain an environment in which the athletic activities of student-athletes are conducted as an integral part of the student-athlete's educational experience. In addition, the FAR also promotes an environment that values cultural diversity and gender equity among student-athletes and athletics staff. The FAR term is three years with possibility of reappointment.



▲ GWU President William
Downs

“I am grateful to Dr. Webb for taking on this important role, as I know her commitment to GWU’s student-athletes is authentic,” praised President Downs. “We are dedicated to competing at the highest level with class and with integrity. We have a huge appetite for winning, but we will always pursue victory the right way. That means strict compliance with the rules that govern our sports, and it means remembering that our athletes are students first and foremost. As FAR, Dr. Webb will be an essential liaison and advocate for the more than 600 Runnin’ Bulldogs who participate in one of our varsity programs.”

Webb noted that some of her favorite Gardner-Webb community experiences involve attending athletic events and cheering on student-athletes. “I also value the times I have had opportunities to personally get to know our student athletes,” she shared. “College athletes have unique stressors. Their ability to manage success in academics and cope with personal experiences impacts their athletic performance, and athletic endeavors may also impact these other areas. My desire to advocate and support student-athletes fits my life philosophy of facilitating empathic, ethical, interactive engagement through an open multicultural lens, which aligns with the unique culture of college athletics.”

Webb is the president-elect of the N.C. Counseling Association and serves as coordinator for GWU Clinical Mental Health Counseling Programs. As the new FAR, she views her primary responsibilities as advocating for GWU student athletes, creating welcoming relationships with them as a confidant, while also providing needed resources. She added, “I will collaborate with staff who are responsible for NCAA compliance, and with our athletic staff as I seek their guidance for how I can support any teams or individual athletes.”

Additionally, she has worked with athletes to help them manage anxiety and other problems that can inhibit their athletic performance. Webb stressed, “Wellness should be approached holistically—physically, spiritually, intellectually, cognitively, and psychologically—for athletes to have maximum opportunity to succeed. Although my role as Faculty Athletics Representative will not involve individual counseling, I will utilize my training and experience as a mental health professional to

empathetically listen to any presenting concerns of athletes so I can make appropriate referrals to enhance their personal, academic, and athletic experiences.”

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.