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STUDENTS

Gardner-Webb Presidents Switch Places for the Day

BY WEB COMMUNICATIONS ON APRIL 5, 2022



While Student Government President Jada Newton Attends Meetings, President William Downs Goes to Class

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—This week, Gardner-Webb University had a new president for eight hours. Student Government Association President Jada Newton, a senior, traded places with GWU President William Downs for the day.

“I did this ‘trading places’ exercise at my former university, inviting a top student to be ‘Dean for a Day’ while I attended classes,” Downs explained. “That was a big success, and it allowed both the student and the administrator to gain important insights...plus it is a lot of fun.”

Now, as president of Gardner-Webb, Downs believes that it is essential to learn as much as possible about the actual, day-to-day student experience. He elaborated, “Here we are pledged to build a culture of continuous improvement, so I need to be close to the classroom experience, the dining experience, and to other aspects of life on our campus. Armed with those observations, we can then translate ideas into action on behalf of our students.”

When Downs asked Newton about the idea, she readily agreed. “I was excited to get to be in another President’s shoes for the day,” she assessed. I think the most valuable part of my day was being able to connect with faculty and staff in a way that allowed us to view our university through each other’s eyes.





It was very encouraging to see that we all want to make this place as great as possible for students and valuing each other's opinions, including the students, was a step in a positive direction."

Downs participated in classes for *Tennis*, *Business Strategy*, and *Constitutional Law*. He also assisted in prepping bags for the Feeding Kids Cleveland County program, met with the SGA, and joined Newton for a partnership signing with Stanley Community College.

"As I anticipated it would be, this was a full and informative day," reflected Downs. "Symbolically, I hope it demonstrated to our students that I am always eager and ready to get out of the office and to join them in conversation. Substantively, the message to everyone was that we can't profess to be 'Students First' unless we as University leaders actually listen, learn,

and then respond to the needs of our students. At the end of our day, Jada and I sat down and reflected on our respective observations, we talked about what Administration and SGA could do together, and we pledged to continue the work of making GWU the best place possible to live and learn."

Newton led the President's Leadership Cabinet, met with GWU's new Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Karen Aubrey, and the new Director of Diversity and Inclusion, Lawrence Brinson. She also spent time with the Student Success staff and members from University Marketing and Webb Communications.

"I think this experience was a great opportunity to see how administration works behind the scenes and realize that a lot of hard work, coordination, communication, and balance go into managing Gardner-Webb," added Newton. "The most important takeaway is ... to treat others with the kindness and respect we all deserve, knowing that we all want to achieve the same goal."



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.