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### GWU President Announces Grant-Seeking Reassignment Award to Ellen Campos Sousa

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## ACADEMICS

# GWU President Announces Grant-Seeking Reassignment Award to Ellen Campos Sousa

BY WEB COMMUNICATIONS ON APRIL 8, 2022

## Dedicated Research Explores Empowerment of Vulnerable Women in U.S. and Brazil

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.— Gardner-Webb University President Dr. William M. Downs has presented the 2022-23 Grant-Seeking Reassignment Award to Dr. Ellen Campos Sousa, assistant professor of marketing. For the third consecutive year, this award seeks to provide recipients the time to prepare and submit a proposal for external funding in support of scholarly activities and program enhancements. “I am very thankful to Dr. Downs for this award,” said Campos Sousa. “Opportunities such as this are very important to help us in creating good practices to positively affect society.”

Campos Sousa’s project, “*Social Change via Relational Engagement: Redeeming Women’s Power*,” is a collaborative effort between partners in the United States and Brazil. It focuses on research and hands-on program development and implementation to assist women in overcoming the personal anguish associated to poverty, violence, cultural stigmatism, external expectations, self-doubt and more.

“This research has a social impact aligned with the GWU mission statement,” Campos Sousa offered. “The indirect social impact cannot be measured, but it will promote change on women’s lives and consequently reflecting on those around them. My main goal with this research is to be able to be a tool on promoting societal change and offering an opportunity for a vulnerable population to improve their wellbeing.”

When Downs arrived at Gardner-Webb, he placed a strong emphasis on research-related and academically-focused opportunities for faculty to enhance programs and scholarly pursuits. According to Downs, millions of dollars from public and private sectors are provided annually to university faculty throughout the United States in order to boost these types of activities. “These funds go to support individual or collaborative faculty research and creative projects, academic program building, instructional innovation, student support, equipment purchases, and the like,” Downs noted.

Downs added that external grants are essential in providing a path for faculty and programs to gain benefits. “Private universities, which do not receive annual outlays from the state legislature, rely heavily on grants to grow and strengthen their programs. Although Gardner-Webb does not have a



history of grant-seeking, we are now getting in the game so that we can better support our students, better equip our faculty, and better promote our institutional brand.”

Campos Sousa hopes through these immersive studies that women will be able to move past existing traumas, gain independence, and irradicate pure survival mentalities. She believes that providing these women opportunities to explore empowerment offers benefits beyond the personal space. On the other side, she wants them to be able to express, “I am aware of who I am, what I want for me, and I can make my own choices. I can do everything from a place of love, and I can be compassionate to others. It is about knowing who I am and that I deserve the best,” she added.

Previous award recipients are Dr. Stefka Eddins, professor of chemistry, Dr. Steven Harmon, professor of historical theology, and Dr. Patricia Sparti, professor of music.

*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](https://gardner-webb.edu/) (<https://gardner-webb.edu/>).*