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ATHLETICS

Gardner-Webb Officials Launch New Runnin' Bulldog Logo

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON APRIL 28, 2022



Varsity Partners Created New Athletics Brand After Interviews with Over 500 Stakeholders

The launch of a new Runnin' Bulldog logo today for Gardner-Webb follows six months of research and interviews with more than 500 Gardner-Webb stakeholders. Working with Varsity Partners in Charlotte, N.C., the University's revitalized athletic brand is drawn from historical graphics dating back to before the 1960s and updated with a fresh, custom look.



“Distinctive, Fresh, Bold, and Confident...those were among the qualities that we prioritized when we set out to take our Runnin' Bulldog to the next level,” shared Gardner-Webb President William Downs. “Watching Varsity Partners work to design something special for our student-athletes and for our fans has been pure fun. I love the new look! It's big, it's authentic, it's fierce, and it's got swagger. I can't wait to see our sports venues transformed, our uniforms enlivened, and our new Dawg recognized everywhere we compete.”

The University Marketing Council recommended this rebrand work to Downs in July 2021, because the last GWU athletic (<https://gwusports.com/>). brand update was more than 35 years ago. Additionally, the current bulldog logo has become less distinctive over the years and has been adapted into numerous “clip art” illustrations across the internet. However, loyal fans of the logo will be assured that the present graphic is not going away, but it is being retired and will be used for “retro” and “throwback” promotions.

In creating the new brand, Varsity Partners (<https://www.vpco.io/>) conducted focus group research and either met with or called alumni, faculty, staff, students, student-athletes, trustees and friends.

Kylee Garrison, a senior student-athlete on the volleyball team from Huntersville, N.C., enjoyed participating in the process and was excited about the new brand. “I am not someone who normally loves change, so I was surprised by how much I liked the new logo,” observed Garrison, who is dual-enrolled in the Master of Science strength and conditioning program. “I think it matches the vision for updating the campus and progressing towards the future. I look forward to seeing how this starts a chain reaction at GWU and what it looks like to be a Runnin' Bulldog. Thank you to everyone who worked so hard to make sure that we all have a renewed sense of school pride.”

Nick Irwin, partner and chief creative officer with Varsity Partners, commented that as his team worked through the identity process with the GWU campus and Boiling Springs community, they sensed a genuine sense of community. “We really enjoyed working with everyone to design an updated identity that aligns with the growth, vision and spirit of Gardner-Webb,” he affirmed. “We feel that the end result is an excellent representation of a Runnin' Bulldog's steadfast determination, and the student-athlete's drive for success on and off the field.”



The bulldog logos and new type mark or distinctive lettering, as well as color, spirit stripes and other special items, such as soccer “badges” were created for Gardner-Webb athletics. These elements will bring a new level of consistency and visibility to expand the GWU brand (<https://gardner-webb.edu/student-life/athletics/athletics-rebrand/>), nationally.

L’Mia Littlejohn, a junior exercise science major and member of the basketball team, is from Shelby, N.C. The present Runnin’ Bulldog logo is all she’s ever known, but she believes it is time for the University to have a new look. “I think it is important to rebrand so we stay up-to-date and current,” she noted. “The athletes are excited to get new gear.”

Head Basketball Coach Tim Craft praised the new branding and logo enhancements as the latest example of Gardner-Webb athletics continuing to strive for excellence. He emphasized, “Varsity Partners has done an amazing job of modernizing our bulldog logo and other features of our brand, while also capturing the tradition and community that makes Gardner-Webb special and unique. This new look will enhance school spirit, and will be an exciting change for our student-athletes, alumni and fans.”

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/>).

[Gardner-Webb Athletics \(https://gwusports.com/\)](https://gwusports.com/)

Gardner-Webb is a NCAA Division I institution, competing in the Big South Conference, Coastal Collegiate Swimming Association and Southern Conference. The University has over 500 student-athletes participating in 11 men's and 11 women's sports. Student athletes make up over 36% of the student population for the traditional undergraduate program at Gardner-Webb.

See photos from the rebrand launch. 

STUDENT-ATHLETES MAKE UP OVER 36% OF THE STUDENT POPULATION FOR THE TRADITIONAL UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM AT GARDNER-WEBB.