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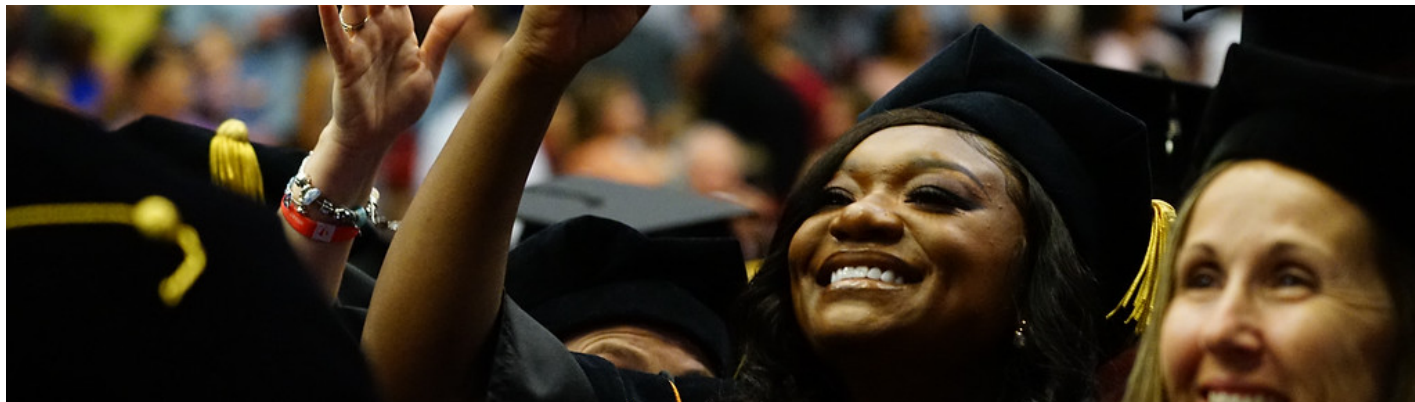
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Gardner-Webb Awards Degrees in Spring Commencement Ceremonies on May 6 and 7

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON MAY 10, 2022



More than 500 Graduates Honored with Traditional Ceremony and Separate Recognition Events

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Officials at Gardner-Webb University hosted commencement activities on May 6 and 7. Power 5 Basketball Coach Chris Holtmann was the guest speaker for Friday’s ceremony held in the Paul Porter Arena in Lutz-Yelton Convocation Center.

More than 500 graduates were honored over the two days. Saturday’s activities featured separate ceremonies for the University’s colleges or schools, where graduates walked across the stage, received individual recognition and congratulations from GWU President Dr. William M. Downs. In addition, outstanding students were recognized for their academic achievements. Receptions were held throughout the day for graduates, their families and friends.

To begin Friday’s ceremony, Downs praised the graduates for their accomplishments despite various challenges, including a global pandemic. “Perseverance suggests a strength of character that will lead you to a lifetime of accomplishment,” Downs asserted. “And so it is that we come together this evening to celebrate you. Tonight, we celebrate your achievement. We celebrate your persistence, and we celebrate your determination. And, perhaps most importantly, we celebrate the promise that each of you will carry forth from this place...the promise of a bright and rewarding future.”



Several graduates were honored for outstanding leadership, citizenship, and academic excellence. The Most Outstanding Female Graduate medal was presented to Sarah Goode, of Lenoir, N.C., who was also a Senior Scholastic Award winner. An English major with a concentration in creative writing, she participated in the Undergraduate Research Scholar Program. Her project was writing a draft for a juvenile fantasy novel. Goode has been involved in campus ministries and after graduation will intern with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in Charlotte, N.C.

The Most Outstanding Male Graduate medal was presented to Thomas Manning, of Boiling Springs, who was a double major in English and communications. He served as president of the Senior Class, vice-president for Alpha Chi, was on the creative team for the award-winning documentary “The Dancin’ Bulldogs: A 16 Seed’s Journey to the NCAA Tournament” (2020), and has worked with the GWU sports information department producing athletic broadcasts and webcasts for several years.

Goode and Manning were both named to Gardner-Webb Who’s Who.

Senior Scholastic Awards were presented to students who completed their academic careers with a perfect 4.0 GPA. The honorees were:

- Bien Gabrielle Rodriguez Gaddi, of Stanley, N.C., management.
- Emily Rhew, of Mooresville, N.C., psychology.
- Faith Evangeline Parandhamaia, of Accident, Md., management.
- Holly Grace O’Brien, of Cornelius, N.C., marketing.
- Jonathan A. Frye, of Columbia, S.C., biology.
- Louise Karin Schmidtgen, of Ettlingen, Germany, international business.

The Degree Completion Program Scholastic Award was presented to Grace Elizabeth Davis, of Johnson City, Tenn., management; and Allison Melette Duncan, of Spruce Pine, N.C., elementary education.

The Darlene J. Gravett Citizen Scholar Award was presented to Dr. Nichole Ijames, who has served in public schools for 25 years and is currently the principal at Challenger Early College High School in Hickory, N.C. The award is named in honor of Gravett, longtime dean of the Graduate School and associate provost emerita.

As a graduating student from the Doctor of Education program in Educational Leadership, Ijames' dissertation, "Armored Vulnerability: Stories of Leader Resilience Among Black Female Principals," highlighted patterns of resilience, specifically, patterns of being armored by faith, family, culture, and community. She interviewed Black women principals across the state of North Carolina, inviting them to share their stories of resilience in navigating racial and gender-related barriers inherent to their roles as Black women in the principalship.

Holtmann, former GWU head basketball coach, is in his 25th year of collegiate coaching and just completed his fifth year as head basketball coach of The Ohio State University. He has led his teams to the NCAA Tournament in each of the last seven years and is one of just three Power 5 coaches to win at least 20 games in eight consecutive seasons.

He urged the graduates to keep three thoughts in mind as they begin the next chapter of their lives:

1. Pursue excellence in your calling—resist comparison: "God has gifted you with specific and unique gifts. Run your own race."
2. Manage life's disappointments: "I pray you choose perseverance over giving in, patience over impulsiveness, optimism in the face of self-doubt."
3. Share and give: "One of my all-time favorite quotes is from Martin Luther King Jr. when he said, 'life's most important question is what are you doing for others.'"

Holtmann summed up, "As you pursue your specific calling, I would challenge you to pursue it in an excellent way. My hope for you is that you resist what Solomon called the 'chasing after the wind' that comes with comparison (Ecclesiastes 4:4); that you manage the ups and downs of life with grit and courage; and that you lead a rich and full life that only comes from sharing and giving."

A video of Friday's commencement ceremony is also available on the [University Facebook page \(https://www.facebook.com/gardnerwebb/\)](https://www.facebook.com/gardnerwebb/) and [YouTube channel \(https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGP4wUtKfrvrbjicSFyGnNw\)](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCGP4wUtKfrvrbjicSFyGnNw).

Information for Gardner-Webb graduates regarding stage images taken at commencement: Proofs will be sent to graduates usually within a week of commencement. GW Graduates may contact the Grad Images Customer Service Department at (800) 261-2576, online [here](https://nam11.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.gradimages.com%2F&data=05%7C01%7Cjbridges9%40Gardner-Webb.edu%7Cda107268eb554a424f3108da31b9df94%7Cb75d79c569584457972cfe8241c63355%7C0%7C0%7C637876971637519159%7CUnknown%7CTWEpbGZst), [or email \[ecc.giservice@gradimages.net\]\(mailto:ecc.giservice@gradimages.net\) \(mailto:ecc.giservice@gradimages.net\)](https://nam11.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.gradimages.com%2F&data=05%7C01%7Cjbridges9%40Gardner-Webb.edu%7Cda107268eb554a424f3108da31b9df94%7Cb75d79c569584457972cfe8241c63355%7C0%7C0%7C637876971637519159%7CUnknown%7CTWEpbGZst). They have a large team of customer care representatives ready to help graduates and family members with anything they may need.

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.