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6-9-2022

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#### Recommended Citation

Office of University Communications, "Gardner-Webb Provost Names New Director of the University's Honors Program" (2022). *Gardner-Webb NewsCenter Archive*. 2469.  
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## Gardner-Webb Provost Names New Director of the University's Honors Program

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON JUNE 9, 2022



### Dr. Wilson Hawkins, Assistant Professor of Physics, Grateful for Opportunity to Work with Honors Students

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Karen Aubrey has named Assistant Professor of Physics Dr. Wilson Hawkins as the Director of the Gardner-Webb University Honors Program. Hawkins came to GWU in 2021, after earning his Ph.D. in Biomedical Physics from East Carolina University (ECU) in Greenville, N.C.

The Honors Program provides academically qualified students of all majors with enriched learning opportunities and classes taught by Honors faculty. To graduate from the Honors Program, students are required to complete 24 credit hours in Honors courses; initiate, prepare, present and defend a senior Honors thesis; and participate in 80 hours of volunteer service in the community.

Aubrey expressed her gratitude that Hawkins has accepted the new role. “He already has been active this past year with the program, so he will be able to provide some continuity while also making it his own,” she affirmed. “His love of working with students is evident the moment he speaks. That enthusiasm certainly shows in the wonderful ideas he has already shared with me for the future of the program.”

Hawkins also received his bachelor's and master's degrees in physics from ECU, and he served as the lead physics tutor for five years, training other tutors. As a graduate student, he began teaching courses. He was also very involved in the ECU atomic physics group and designed experiments in the

accelerator lab; however his passion is teaching, which is one of the main reasons he considered the job at Gardner-Webb to be a perfect fit.



- ▲ A few of the activities of the Honors Association: (from left) presenting at conferences, performing community service, and helping with the annual clean up of the New River in West Jefferson, N.C.

“The need at Gardner-Webb was for someone to teach introductory physics courses for non-physics major students,” Hawkins related. “These survey courses contain the exact material that I spent thousands of hours tutoring, teaching, and falling in love with as a student. The majority of my students are applying to graduate and professional programs that require physics for admission as well as their entrance exams. I get to work with some of the best science students at the University every single day.”

He is from a small rural town, Grays Chapel, N.C., located near Asheboro and also wanted to get a job close to home. Moreover, Hawkins has strong family ties to GWU. His grandfather, the Rev. Norman Livengood, who helped to raise him, attended Gardner-Webb before serving as a Southern Baptist minister in the Asheboro/Greensboro area for over 50 years.

Dr. Tom Jones was the founder of the Honors Program and director for over three decades. He recently retired from Gardner-Webb after 42 years of service, and served as a mentor for Hawkins over the past year. Hawkins was involved in numerous Honors’ activities, shadowed Jones, and even drove the University van for many Honors’ activities.

Hawkins said the requirements for the Honors Program won't change, but he wants the student leaders in the Honors Association to take on more responsibilities for planning and coordinating activities.

"The students admitted into the honors program are already highly motivated, gifted students. They are signing up as 18-year-old freshmen for extra work—writing an undergraduate thesis, enrolling in honors courses, and volunteering over 80 hours of their time to Boiling Springs and surrounding communities. When students exit our program, the University rightfully recognizes them as exceptional at graduation."

He continued, "I am truly blessed and grateful to be a part of Gardner-Webb University. Not only do I have the amazing opportunity to share my passion for physics, but also work alongside some of our most highly motivated students. The students graduating from the University Honors Program are leaving Gardner-Webb and building a reputation for the next generation of Bulldogs."

*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.*