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## GWU Faculty and Staff Host Group from Iredell-Statesville Schools

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON JUNE 21, 2022



### Through Gear-Up Program, High School Students Learn About College Opportunities

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Tristan Zinkhan peered into a stereoscope, amazed at what he was seeing. A rising 10th-grader from West Iredell High School in Statesville, N.C., Zinkhan was one of 60 students from Iredell-Statesville Schools (I-SS) who spent the day on Gardner-Webb University's campus recently.

Hosting the event were faculty from the College of Education and the Department of Natural Sciences, along with Admissions staff.

Zinkhan said it was the first time he had used a stereoscope—an optical microscope that produces a three-dimensional visualization of the sample being examined. He also liked all the other “firsts” he had experienced during the day in the areas of astronomy, anatomy, physiology and geology.

“I just love that they show you so much, and you do things that I’ve never witnessed,” Zinkhan praised. “They are really nice people, really engaging. I think it is amazing.”



The students who visited Gardner-Webb are part of the I-SS Gear Up program (<https://www.issnc.org/schools-programs/gear-up/gear-up-grant-information>) that was funded with a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. It is designed to increase the number of low-income students who are prepared to enter and succeed in postsecondary education.

College of Education Dean and Professor Dr. Prince Bull affirmed that the Gear-Up partnership is working. “The program has opened the college pathway to many students who were not thinking about attending college,” Bull noted. “Now, they see Gardner-Webb University as an option to fulfill their dreams. This outcome is the overarching goal of the Gear-Up grant. Thanks to the effective collaboration, the partnership between Iredell-Stateville Schools and Gardner-Webb will fulfill dreams beyond our imaginations.”

The grant was awarded in the fall of 2018 and follows a cohort of students from grades six and seven through graduation. As a partner with I-SS, Gardner-Webb University hosted a tour for these students in 2019 and also brought them to campus for additional activities. The tours and workshops were canceled during the height of the COVID pandemic, so this is the first time the students have been back to campus.

Courtney Kimball, a graduation coach with the I-SS program, has known the students since they were in elementary school. “I taught a lot of these kids when they were in fourth grade,” she stated. “I think GEAR Up has been helpful. A lot of our students are first generation college students. We have been an extra set of hands for their families—kind of like counselors.”

Zinkhan and Raven Miller, also a rising 10th-grader at West Iredell, both said they have learned a lot from Gear Up. “It is amazing; it gives you a lot of opportunities to know what you want in life,” Zinkhan affirmed. “I really appreciate that, because I’m really considering (attending) this college.”

Miller added, “I like how there is a lot of different things to do – they are accommodating for everyone—for your interests,” she asserted. “There are a lot of fun activities to get you involved with the school and you meet new people.”



The group also included students from North Iredell and Statesville high schools. Besides looking through stereoscopes to solve a simple crime puzzle with Dr. Stefka Eddins and Venita Totten, they:

- Observed solar flares with Dr. Wilson Hawkins.
- Dissected a specimen with Dr. Meredith Rowe and Stacie Smith.
- Measured their grip strength and investigated the effects of several variables on heart rate with Jay Zimmer.
- Examined several types of fossils with Dr. David Campbell.

In addition, a small group of parents accompanied the group and spent the day learning about the GWU community and admission process. Assisting the parents were Lindsey Blanton from Admissions and her team.

Also helping with the event were faculty and staff from the College of Education:

- Prince Bull.
- Julie May – Coordinator for 2022.
- Lane Wesson.
- Donna Suttle.
- Joey Lord.
- Steve Stone.
- Anita Sanders.
- Wendy Turbyfill – Original planner and coordinator for past years.

Learn more about the GWU [College of Education](https://gardner-webb.edu/academics/colleges-schools/education/) (<https://gardner-webb.edu/academics/colleges-schools/education/>), and [Department of Natural Sciences](https://gardner-) (<https://gardner->

[webb.edu/academics/colleges-schools/arts-and-sciences/natural-sciences/](http://webb.edu/academics/colleges-schools/arts-and-sciences/natural-sciences/)).

*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.*