

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Gardner-Webb Hires Department Chairs for Music, and Communication, Art & Design

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Dr. Aaron Rice and Dr. Kortni Alston Bring Wealth of Experience in Their Fields

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Gardner-Webb University Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Karen Aubrey has announced the addition of two new administrative positions in the College of Arts and Sciences. Dr. Kortni Alston, of Gastonia, N.C., will serve as chair of the Department of Communication, Art & Design. Joining the Department of Music as chair is Dr. Aaron M. Rice, who has roots in western North Carolina.

“Dr. Kortni Alston brings a wealth of experience to us in the areas of student, faculty, and staff well-being,” Aubrey praised. “Dr. Aaron Rice comes to us having done extensive work as a conductor with an impressive variety of choral groups.”



▲ Dr. Aaron M. Rice



▲ Dr. Kortni Alston

Aubrey further commended Alston's distinctive background. "Her combination of mass communication experience, management experience, and research as a happiness scholar will benefit our students by exposing them to new ideas and multiple perspectives," she said.

Alston has over 17 years of experience in mass communication. She will also serve Gardner-Webb as associate professor of journalism. She received her PhD from the College of Journalism and Communication at The University of Florida in Gainesville. She earned her MBA from Morgan State University in Baltimore, Md., and her Bachelor of Arts in Television Production from Delaware State University in Dover. Alston is a former television reporter, news director turned happiness scholar, and TEDx speaker.

"As a happiness scholar, I treasure positive emotions," Alston asserted. "I am enthusiastic about joining this esteemed university that is committed to preparing students for leadership and service. My vision is to continue to build from the extraordinary work done by the Department of Communication, Art & Design. I am committed to partnering with leadership, faculty, staff, and students in developing innovative programs, experimental learning, and student-produced programming and content creation with an interdisciplinary approach."

Alston is the host of the Kourting Happiness podcast, ranked among the top 80 podcasts on happiness and workplace well-being. The former first lady of the United States, Mrs. Rosalynn Carter, appointed Alston to serve on her advisory board for the Rosalynn Carter Fellowships in Mental Health Journalism at the Carter Center in Atlanta, Ga. She helps journalists worldwide with mental health reporting and their personal well-being. Alston is engaged to Ken Lemon, an Emmy award-winning reporter for WSOC-TV.

In welcoming Rice to The University, Aubrey noted, "I am excited that he brings to our campus his deep musical experience along with his strong leadership background."

Rice will also serve as associate professor of music and direct the Music and Worship Leadership Studies program. He has 12 years of experience in higher education and has served churches in music ministry for 15 years.

"As an administrator and faculty member, it is my desire to serve students with care academically, relationally, spiritually, and experientially," Rice shared. "I hope to breath fresh life into the Music and Worship Leadership concentrations for our student body and particularly for our regional congregations. We are poised for growth in this area as many churches are now seeking young pastoral musicians to fill vacancies."

Prior to his arrival in Boiling Springs, Rice served at Shorter University in Rome, Ga., as director of Choral Activities and coordinator of Music and Worship Leadership. He received his Doctor of Music from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, his Master of Sacred Music from East Carolina University in Greenville, N.C., and his bachelor's degree in biblical studies at Southeastern College at Wake Forest, N.C. Rice is a native of North Carolina and is thrilled to be back in

the Tar Heel state. He is married to Lane, who serves as director of Admissions and Enrollment Management at Gaston Christian School. They have two children, Kati Fletcher, and Henry.

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.