

ACADEMICS

Gardner-Webb Provost Announces New Executive Director of Student Success Division

BY OFFICE OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNICATIONS ON JANUARY 25, 2023



Dr. Ryan Erck Brings Valuable Experience and Research in Living/Learning Communities

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Dr. Ryan W. Erck, of Waco, Texas, a higher education practitioner and researcher focused on student engagement and learning, has been named the executive director of Gardner-Webb University’s Student Success Division. He was chosen after a national search by a campus search committee, and officially begins his duties on Jan. 30. He reports directly to Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Dr. Karen Aubrey.

“Dr. Ryan Erck brings his valuable research background in Living/Learning Communities and his first-hand work in the best practices of helping students to be successful,” Aubrey affirmed. “I look forward to his leadership of our Student Success division and the essential work that they do with retention. I believe that his guidance will allow us to achieve a next level of excellence in that area.”



▲ Dr. Ryan Erck

Erck is coming from Baylor University in Waco, Texas, where he was program director of LEAD living-learning community in the School of Education. He developed new academic initiatives, such as a faculty lecture series, academic resource library, and graduate student tutoring program. He served as an LLC course administrator and lecturer within Baylor's minor in leadership studies program, and he utilized data to build targeted outreach programs which supported student success and retention.

"I was drawn to this opportunity at Gardner-Webb because I see a campus that aims to seamlessly weave together faith formation and education," Erck asserted. "I wanted to become part of and serve in a place that promoted a Christ-animated experience, and I feel that GWU does that intentionally. God made it pretty clear that this was a good direction to go, and I feel that I can use my knowledge and experiences to make a positive impact on the Boiling Springs campus."

Erck also previously worked in other various areas at Baylor, including Student-Athlete Services, Student Success Initiatives, and serving as a full-time lecturer. He's also taught masters and doctoral graduate courses in the field of higher education. He has a Ph.D. in higher education and leadership from Baylor University, and an MS in educational human resource development and BS in leadership and development from Texas A&M university.

"I want to approach this role as a collaboration across the GWU campus," Erck related. "'Student success' is not the sole job of one office or division, but rather an entire community. So, I want to promote partnerships and innovative initiatives that involve faculty/staff across the broader campus. Retention is important in this role, so I want to explore some creative ways we can work on that, and I also want to think about how success is a wide-ranging label and think about what it looks like to support our Runnin' Bulldogs in a holistic way that cares for them as whole people."

Erck said his wife, Kasey, and two children are excited to get plugged into the community here. "My kids are learning 'Sko Dawgs'—we are ready to become part of the GWU family," he stated.

Search Committee Members:

- Dr. Karen Aubrey, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Dr. Bruce Boyles, Associate Provost, Professional and Graduate Studies, Professor, Ed.D., College of Education
- Dr. Nicole Waters, Dean, College of Health Sciences, Associate Professor of Nursing
- Dr. Jennifer Buckner, Associate Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, Professor of English, Composition Studies Coordinator
- Cheryl Potter, Associate Dean of the Noel Center for Disability Resources
- Carrie Baker, Director of Academic Services for Student Athletes
- Blake Elizalde, Student Body President
- Lawrence Brinson, Director of Diversity & Inclusion

Gardner-Webb University is North Carolina's recognized leader in private, Christian higher education. A Carnegie-Classified Doctoral/Professional University, GWU is home to nine colleges and schools, 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/) (<https://gardner-webb.edu/>).