

**FACULTY**

# Gardner-Webb Assistant Professor Dr. Erin Cook Receives President's Early Career Award

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## Honor Recognizes Scholarship, Instruction, Professional Development and Service

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C.—Gardner-Webb University President Dr. William Downs has announced the recipient of the President's Early Career Award for 2023. Dr. Erin Cook, assistant professor and program coordinator for human services, was selected for the honor based on her productivity in scholarship, creative discovery, and instruction that exceeds expectations.



“I really think we all should be proud of, and grateful for, the work that Dr. Cook has done to coordinate our program in Human Services at GWU,” Downs praised. “She has led the effort to create new courses, to map out concentration options, and to ensure that students have the support they need to be successful. By itself, that’s a pretty full plate for an assistant professor; impressively, Dr. Cook has made

many additional contributions during her time at Gardner-Webb, and for all of them she is indeed deserving of this important recognition.”

Since 2021, Downs has presented the Early Career Award to full-time assistant professors who also demonstrate outstanding performance in professional development and excellence in service. The annual award includes an additional \$1,000 in professional development funds for Cook to use during the 2023-2024 academic year.

Cook expressed her gratitude for receiving the award. “I am very humbled and appreciative of this honor and look forward to proving worthy of this recognition,” she affirmed.

She was nominated by Dr. Bobbie Cox, chair of the Department of Public Service and professor of criminal justice and public administration. “Dr. Cook is constantly looking for opportunities to improve her teaching and share her methods with other professors,” Cox noted. “Her teaching effectiveness is often recognized by her colleagues and administration.”

As the only full-time faculty member for human services (<https://gardner-webb.edu/programs/human-services/>), Cook interacts daily with more than 140 students and 20 adjunct professors. She also teaches in the Master of Public Administration (MPA) program. She is Quality Matters (QM) certified and serves as a QM Peer Reviewer. She serves on the General Education Committee which just approved the new General Education Curriculum for the Degree Completion Program. Cook developed QM templates for each course in the MPA and human services programs. She attended the Certified Education Technology Leader (CETL) Institute and participated in additional QM courses.



▲ Dr. Erin Cook celebrates with a student after graduation.

Cook’s service to the University extends to various groups in the community. She volunteers as a Guardian Ad Litem case manager, a role that requires completion of a comprehensive training program and background check. In this capacity, she is an advocate for children and teenagers, whose families

have come to the attention of the courts. Cook also serves on the boards of Champions for Children, Blue Ridge Community College and Western Piedmont Workforce Development. She is a GWU Faculty Marshal and a member of the National Organization of Human Services.

Cox summarized, “The time that Dr. Cook gives our MPA students, Degree Completion Program students, her colleagues, and her community makes her worthy of the highest ranking in service and leadership and honor of being awarded the President’s Early Career Award.”

Cook has been a full-time assistant professor at Gardner-Webb since 2018. She came to the University in 2013 as associate director of Personal and Professional Development. From 2004 to 2013, she was associate director of enrollment management at Lenoir-Rhyne (LR) University in Hickory. She is also an alumna of LR, receiving her Bachelor of Arts in human and community services with minors in biology, psychology and sociology magna cum laude in 2004 and her Master of Arts in clinical mental health counseling in 2011. Cook earned her Doctor of Education in organizational leadership from Gardner-Webb University in 2018.

## Previous winners of the President’s Early Career Award

**2022** – Dr. Aihua Zhang, assistant professor in the Department of Social Sciences.

**2021** – Dr. Mitch Porter, assistant professor in the College of Education.

**2020** – Dr. Yvonne Smith, assistant professor in the Hunt School of Nursing, Dr. Anna Sieges-Beal, assistant professor in the Department of Religious Studies and Philosophy, and Dr. Casey Delehanty, former assistant professor.

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