

We Are... Faith, Service, Leadership.

Gardner-Webb Sets New Standards, For God and Humanity

Written by Matt Walters



Most people past grade school rarely think about grammar and language mechanics. Subjects and predicates, pronouns, adverbs, and gerunds—words like these invoke nightmares of pop quizzes and cold sweats. Still, understanding the parts of our speech can tell us much, not only about what our language means, but about how it means—about the way our language defines us.

For example, “Pro Deo et Humanitate”—“For God and Humanity”—is a prepositional phrase. In itself, it is not a complete sentence. It depends upon either a verb phrase or a noun phrase to make it mean something. In other words, our university’s motto means nothing in and of itself, unless it becomes a statement of our character or our action. “We Are For God and Humanity.” “We Serve For God and Humanity.” “We Live For God and Humanity.”

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In his strategic plan for achieving a higher ground in higher education, Gardner-Webb President Dr. Frank Bonner expressed his bold and ambitious vision for Gardner-Webb to become one of “the very finest Christian universities in the nation,” insisting that “it will

be the graduates of Gardner-Webb who will bring about that reputation through their character, their accomplishments, and their service.” In so doing, Bonner challenged the University family to consider the seal’s motto, “For God and Humanity,” not a mere slogan to be touted, but a practical, foundational commitment to a life of active faith and service in the community.

The University has taken up that challenge with fervor, making what Provost Dr. Ben Leslie calls “a concerted effort to integrate community service and engagement into the very fabric of the educational experience.” During the 2009-2010 academic year alone, 593 GWU students participated in community service projects through the University’s unique Service Learning Program, joining the 1,904

students who volunteered in the community outside of class. In total, these students logged 46,366 hours of intentional community engagement. This year’s numbers are expected to be even higher.

For this institutionalized commitment to service, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching selected Gardner-Webb for its prestigious Community Engagement Classification. Gardner-Webb is now among only 311 schools, out of the thousands nationwide, to have earned the distinction since the Classification’s inception in 2006.

The North American Mission Board (NAMB) also recognized Gardner-Webb with its Courts Redford Award for excellence in student mobilization, given to the nation’s top 10 schools for mobilizing student missionaries through NAMB. Last year, 84 Gardner-Webb students and team leaders—approximately one in every 15 residential students—participated in mission trips sponsored by the Office of Christian Life and Service, and 12 students served with NAMB as summer missionaries in various locations.



More important than establishing Gardner-Webb’s national reputation, these distinctions prove that Gardner-Webb students are bringing the University’s motto to life, enacting their faith and reaching the world “For God and Humanity.” As Senior Minister Dr. Tracy Jessup says, “Our students have a great desire to serve. They embrace not just a passive faith that is intellectual and emotional, but an active faith that incorporates the heart, head and hands. That is part of who they are—it’s a lifestyle that we should all emulate.”

