



The Pilot

Gardner-Webb University



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Gardner-Webb and YMCA join in partnership

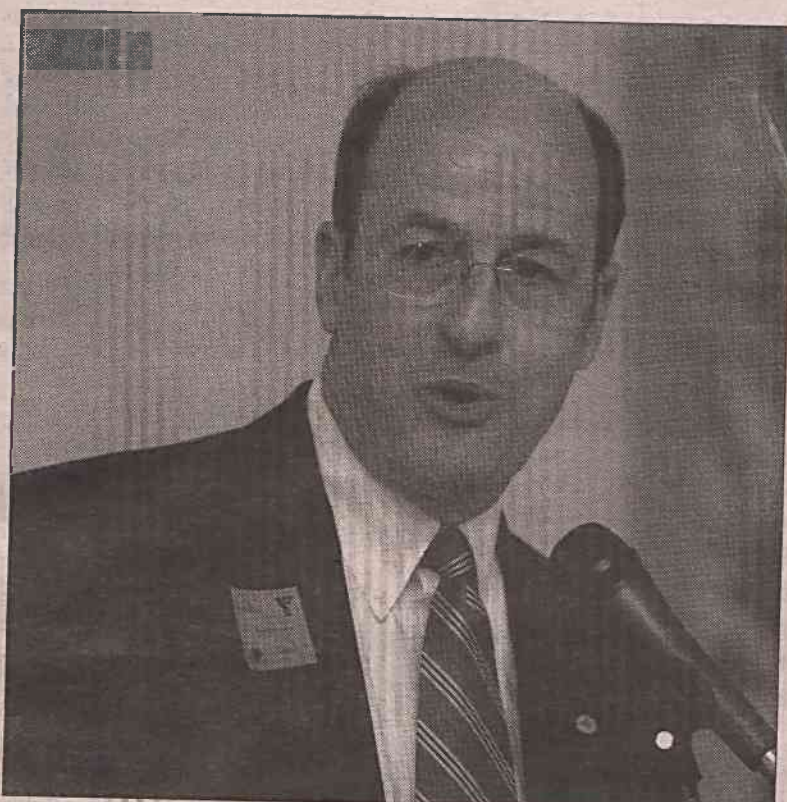


Photo by Scott Holstein

Kenneth Gladish, YMCA CEO, addresses Gardner-Webb faculty, staff, students and local YMCA representatives on Feb. 12.

Sarah Olimb
Pilot Editor

On Feb. 12, it became official. Gardner-Webb and the YMCA of USA joined in a historic partnership, uniting to train students to become leaders in the future of YMCA and other non-profit organizations.

The ceremony, beginning at 11 a.m. in the O. Max Gardner Hall, opened with a welcome from GWU President Frank Campbell, followed by a devotion led by Tracy Jessup, minister to the university. Cameron Corder, chief executive officer of the Cleveland

County Family YMCA, shared his vision for the partnership between GWU and the YMCA. He emphasized that the program's focus is building servant leaders. However, he wants all students to get involved.

"I hope students embrace the Student YMCA," said Corder. "Everyone can be involved in the YMCA, even if they don't foresee a career in it."

Following Corder's address, Kenneth Gladish, chief executive officer of the YMCA of USA, spoke of the impact that the program will

have, both locally and nationally. He stressed the importance of the growth of character as well as cultivation of the three dimensions of human life that encompass the YMCA mission — the mind, body and spirit.

"This program responds to local and national needs to supply leaders for the future," said Gladish. "It would not have happened without real enthusiasm from the local YMCA and the university."

Frank Bonner, provost and senior vice president, first brought the idea of instituting such a program at GWU to the president. Bonner explained the program as a three-way partnership between the YMCA, the local YMCA and the university with all parties supporting the program financially. The YMCA, according to Bonner, hopes to attract more young people to careers in the YMCA because of the shortage of people pursuing non-profit jobs.

A career within the YMCA requires certain training. This program works to give potential employees the needed training and a college education before they graduate, said Bonner.

"The program intertwines with so many things that student development already does — service learning, volunteerism and campus ministries," said Bonner. It will also prepare students for a myriad of careers within the

YMCA like business, administration and recreation."

While those developing the program are still working on the curriculum, Bonner envisions the university offering courses that are both credit and non-credit in order to prepare students for these careers.

Eric Smith, a junior at GWU and the aquatics coordinator at the Dover Foundation YMCA in Shelby, feels that this program will offer students various career opportunities.

"There are a lot of jobs offered through the YMCA; jobs for any major," said Smith.

Emily Stephens, program director for GWU, emphasized the students' role in building the program at GWU.

"This is the time to join," she said, "because the students will help shape the program. I am there to help guide and advise them."

Stephens is holding an informational meeting on 3:30 p.m. Feb. 21 in the Suttle Wellness Center lobby. She will provide general information about the program for interested students. At 4 p.m., Stephens will hold a meeting, informing students about the YMCA mission trip to Poland scheduled for summer 2004.

Campbell feels that the installment of such a program at GWU not only grants existing students more opportunities but also will bring more students to the university.

"It's a great opportunity to bring new students to our campus and introduce them to our kind of lifestyle," said Campbell. "The GWU lifestyle is very compatible with what the YMCA stands for."

The agreement marks the development of a model program to be used in universities and colleges throughout the country. It also heralds the first formal relationship between the YMCA and a formal institution of higher learning in decades, said Gladish.



Photo by Scott Holstein

Brandon Zoch, director of sound support, hangs the YMCA flag on the quad on Feb. 11. Gardner-Webb joined with the YMCA to begin a training program for future YMCA and non-profit leaders.

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