

Javier A. Viera named first non-white president of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary

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(Photo courtesy of Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary)

In January 2021, Javier A. Viera will become the first person of color to head Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. The native of San Juan, Puerto Rico, will succeed Lallene J. Rector, who has served as seminary president since 2013. Earlier this year, Rector announced her intention to step down in order to help care for loved ones with serious health conditions.

Viera is currently the vice provost and dean at Drew University, where he also teaches pastoral theology. At Drew, Viera has been responsible for reversing declining enrollment trends, launching new degree programs, and increasing giving to the school. His scholarly interests include interreligious dialogue and the role of religion in contemporary Latin America.

He holds a master of divinity from Duke Divinity School, a master of sacred theology from Yale Divinity School, and a doctor of education from Columbia University. Viera is in the process of completing a doctor of philosophy dissertation in Latin American studies from the Universidad Interamericana de Puerto Rico.

In a statement released by Garrett-Evangelical, Jerre Stead, head of the school's board of trustees, called Viera's appointment a blessing.

"He has dedicated much of his professional life to building bridges and fostering understanding across religious difference, fighting for racial justice and equity, and has been a fierce advocate for a fully inclusive church," Stead said. "He is a person of profound faith whose leadership is spiritually informed and centered in Christ. Our students, faculty, staff will all benefit greatly from his outstanding background and leadership, and from who he is as a person." —*Christian Century* staff