

UNC Asheville celebrates 83rd anniversary

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UNC Asheville celebrates the 83rd year of its small liberal arts feel and sense of community despite the amazing growth it has undergone, according to **Associate Vice Chancellor for alumni relations Kevan Frazier**.

"If I brought somebody back from when I was here in the late '80s and early '90s, or a decade before, or even a decade before that, I don't think they're going to find it unfamiliar," he said. "There will be new things, but I think there's still a really wonderful consistency and sense of place at UNCA."

According to Frazier, UNCA has grown since the school's founding on Sept. 12, 1927.

"There were 86 students in that first class," he said. "The first graduating class was the class of 1929, and there were 29 graduates that year. We now have about 3,200."

Professor of chemistry John Stevens said the school was quite different for him when he began teaching at the university 42 years ago.

"It was a time when everybody knew everybody," he said. "It was really a family. There was not much in the way of buildings and not much in the way of students. It was very experimental. That's what attracted me here."

Shirley Browning, professor of economics, joined the UNCA faculty just one year after Stevens and said he feared the growth in numbers because he didn't want to lose the connection between students and faculty.

"I am afraid that the institution, in fact, has run the risk of becoming so large that the ability of faculty and students to work closely together in smaller groups, whether it's in teaching or research or service, is becoming endangered," he said.

Browning said despite UNCA's growth in numbers, he enjoyed watching opportunities grow for students throughout the years.

"I have enjoyed seeing the academic

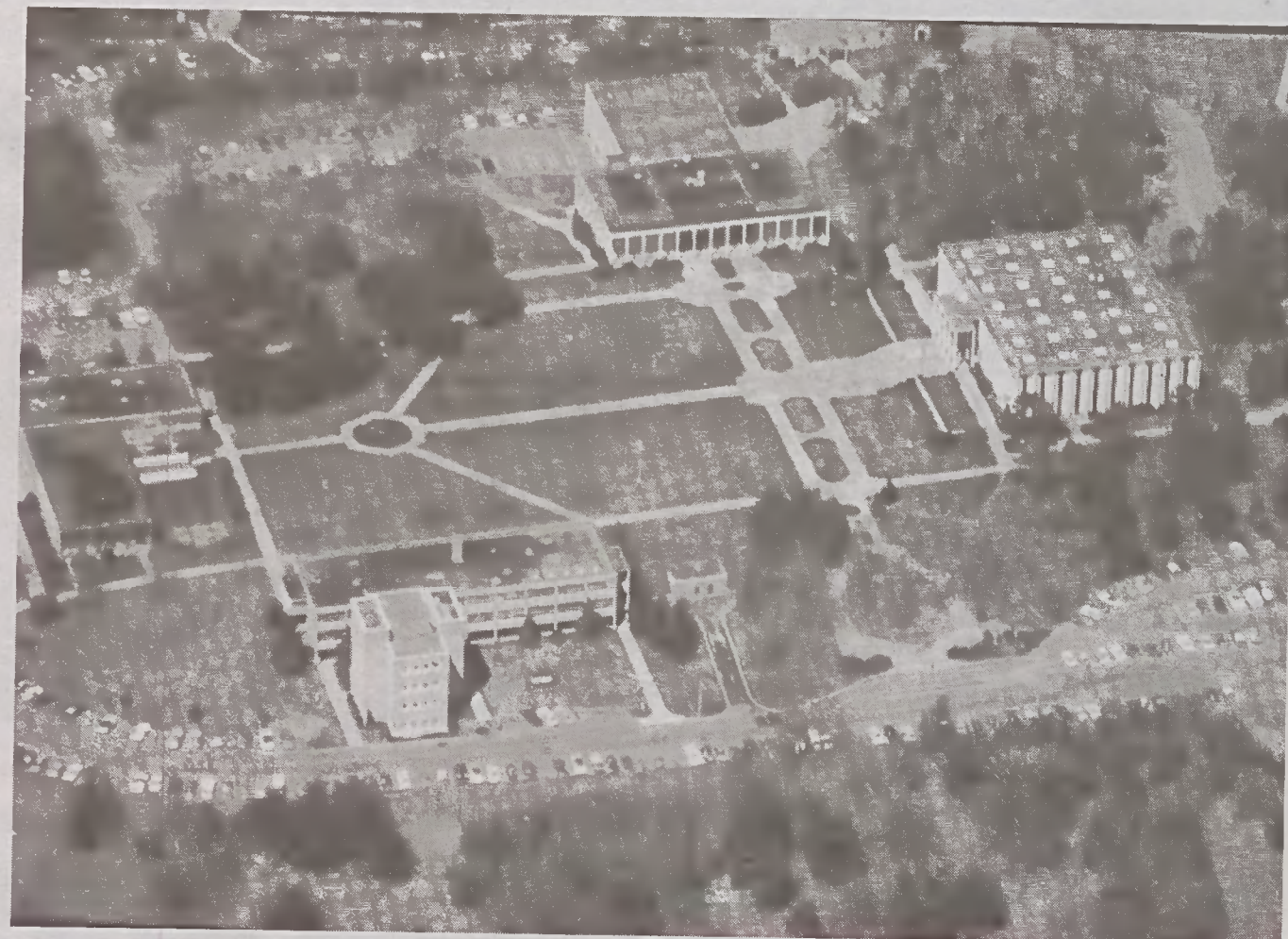


Photo courtesy UNC Asheville, Ramsey Library, Special Collections
UNCA's campus between 1975 and 1983 only featured a small number of buildings. Professor of chemistry John Stevens said the school was much smaller when he began teaching 42 years ago.

programs improve in quality," he said. "It is a combination of having more faculty that would allow more topic subjects and issues within disciplines to be explored by students. I think that has been one of the nicer things I've seen in our growth."

According to Frazier, professors' focus on the success and development of their students dates back to the university's beginnings.

"In the first two years there was no tuition," Frazier said. "Once the Great Depression was in full swing, they had to start charging \$100 a semester for tuition. The faculty members were so committed to their students that they would accept butter, eggs, chickens or whatever students might have at home

to be able to pay for their education."

Stevens said chancellors introduced the biggest changes in the institution, specifically Chancellor David Brown from 1984 to 1990.

"He identified three areas he wanted to focus on," Stevens said. "One was the humanities program. We were going to continue to focus on humanities and move it along. The second one was undergraduate research, and the third one was health promotion."

UNCA held the first national conference on undergraduate research in 1986, and its surprisingly positive response energized the campus, according to Stevens, who worked closely on the project.

"We organized the first year of the

conference and we expected we were going to have 50 to 100 people," he said. "We had 500. The campus realized there was something going on nationally, and we were in the center of it."

Stevens said he is devoted to his students and their lives.

"I have enjoyed impacting society in a number of different ways, like working on the grand challenges of sustainability to help change and impact the lives of students," he said. "They're in a very informative stage. They're trying to figure out who they are and where they're going. I feel like that's part of where I make a difference in society in terms of helping the students in that way."