

A conversation with President Jackson

Editor's Note: When the Chowan College Board of Trustees made the unanimous decision to return Chowan to a four-year institution, the vote sparked much discussion and opinion. Chowan Today asked President Jerry Jackson to respond to the trustees' decision in an interview.

Chowan Today: Dr. Jackson, how do you feel about the trustees' decision to return Chowan to a four-year college?

President Jackson: I would like to say that I am very pleased with the decision the Board of Trustees made, and feel it is the right move to return Chowan to a four-year institution. One of the first challenges I faced when I became president of Chowan College was to look at the four-year issue again. It has been the subject of study and discussion for a long time, and I believe the faculty, staff and students of Chowan are pleased that a decision has been made. It is an exciting time to be at Chowan College, and we are looking forward to the transition with much anticipation.

Chowan Today: What are the first steps that will be taken toward the move to four-year?

President Jackson: I have appointed an institutional transition committee which is already at work to help the college through these most important next few years. These committee members will serve on this committee for a three-year period of time in order to follow the transition through to its completion.

One of the decisions the transition committee is faced with is which majors the college will offer beginning in the fall of 1992. The committee has already submitted a recommendation of four-year degree programs to me, and the following will be approved as four-year curricula at Chowan: English, liberal studies, religion and philosophy, commercial art, printing technology, business, pre-education, K through middle education, physical education and recreation.

Another major the committee will consider for the future is secondary education. I hope the committee will also consider a four-year degree program in environmental studies in the near future because this is increasingly an area of interest and concern.

Chowan Today: Will Chowan continue to offer some two-year degree programs of study?

President Jackson: Yes, we will continue to offer some two-year degrees because there is a need for these, and one of our goals is to continue to prepare students for employment. Some of our two-year degree programs, such as the printing technology and business programs, completely and adequately prepare students to enter the workplace, and we will continue to offer these opportunities.

Chowan Today: How will the cost of tuition at Chowan be affected by the change?



President Jackson: The cost of tuition for the 1991-92 academic year is \$7,980. Increases will probably range from four to six percent each year. We will work to keep our cost down. Currently, we are one of the least expensive private institutions in cost in the state and in our geographic area.

Chowan Today: Will there be a need to build more facilities to house additional students when the college becomes a four-year institution?

President Jackson: Chowan College is fortunate in that we have very adequate facilities on our campus which are well-maintained in every respect. Chowan has always done a good job of maintenance of the campus and its buildings. In fact, a consultant who visited the campus during the four-year study commented that Chowan's facilities were certainly one of the strengths of returning to a four-year college. I do not anticipate adding any facilities at this time. We can house and teach approximately 1200 students, and that is the number that I project we will serve as a four-year college. For that number of students, we have adequate housing and classroom facilities.

Chowan Today: What do you foresee for athletics at Chowan, the four-year college?

President Jackson: Chowan will probably enter the NCAA Division III in the intercollegiate sports that we field. It is my goal for us to expand athletics to offer men's and women's soccer, and women's tennis at Chowan.

There are many mixed feelings about our entering the NCAA Division III because this division does not allow colleges to offer any scholarships to athletes. One definite advantage to entering Division III is that we will be able to compete against colleges such as Guilford, Hampden-Sydney, Washington and Lee, and Randolph-Macon, which are prestigious colleges in the division.

Athletics is a very important consideration to any college, and the four-year study committee, who made the recommendation to our trustees for Chowan to return to four-year status, seriously considered the role of athletics in the decision. It is my belief that we can continue competitive athletic programs, for which Chowan has become known, after we make the transition to a four-year college.

Chowan Today: What are your long-term goals for Chowan, and where do you see the college going?

President Jackson: I have said in the past that I would like to build the Academic Support Program at Chowan, and we are beginning to do that this year; I have great hopes for the new Freshman Experience Program which we will begin to offer next fall. It is my hope that these two programs will be assets to assist Chowan students to compete successfully in college and will help us greatly in the area of retaining students at Chowan.

The Academic Support Program helps students deal with college life. It is my goal to help these students succeed at college and for Chowan to succeed where other colleges fail in integrating these students into the college lifestyle. We are the only college, to my knowledge, that is providing this specialized and unique academic support program for students.

The Freshman Experience Program is a course teaching study habits and coping skills. It will introduce freshmen to college life and help them cope and adjust to the stresses and demands that college presents to the freshman student. This is one way students will begin to adjust to campus life and also begin to develop an "attachment" to Chowan College.

Another dream I have is to build a new student center by the year 1995. This is a facility that is much needed for our students on this campus, and it is my goal to work toward that development. The student center will be a major facility in that it will include a new cafeteria, bookstore, snack bar, movie room, student government and student development offices, dance area, and bowling alley.

I also have the dream of purchasing the River-view School property on High Street in Murfreesboro to be used and maintained by the college. This property would be a real asset to Chowan and could be used by the college in many ways; however, I am not privileged to express my plans for that building at this time.

I believe Chowan College must put students first. If we can succeed with programs such as academic support and the Freshman Experience Program, if we can continue to recruit students who are ready to enter a college curriculum, then we will have achieved the short-term goals that I have set for the college, and we will be closer to the vision I have of Chowan, the four-year institution.