

Fayetteville State University Chancellor's Installation Acceptance Remarks Of Dr. Willis B. McLeod



September 20, 1996

Good morning.
As I was thinking about today and how I would respond, I couldn't help thinking about my mother, and it brought to mind one of my favorite Langston Hughes poems,
Mother to son:

*Well, son, I'll tell you;
Life for me ain't been no crystal stair.
It's had tacks in it,
And splinters,
And boards torn up
And places with no carpet on the floor —
Bare.
But all the time
I've been a-climbin' on,
And reachin' landin's
And turnin' corners
And sometimes goin' in the dark.
Where ther ain't been no light.
So, don't you turn back.
Don't you set down on the steps,
'Cause you finds it's kinder hard.
Don't you fall now —
For I've still goin', honey,
I've still climbin',
And life for me ain't been no crystal stair.*

In 1880, a young Charles W. Chesnutt became the principal of the 13-year-old State Colored Normal School, located in a two-story wood-frame building on Gillespie street in Fayetteville. The school was the first such state-assisted endeavor for Black North Carolinians, and among the first teacher-training institutions established for African-Americans in the south.

Chesnutt wrote that the mission of the institution was, and I quote: "to inspire the young men and women with ambition .. honorable ambition, and earnest desire for usefulness, and we would point them to the heights of knowledge, and tell them how to attain them; to the temple of fame and how to reach it ... They will be better men and

The academic processional of the Installation of Chancellor Willis B. McLeod

women, if they cherish high aspirations."

Chesnutt himself went on to become an outstanding role model for his former normal school charges, with a writing career that brought him national acclaim as the first widely-known African-American novelist.

In 1924, Chesnutt's successor, Dr. E.E. Smith, proudly shared the following in a letter to Professor J.W. Seabrook at Columbia University: "Our normal school numbers 25 in the junior and 25 in the senior class ... Our high school has a little more than 450. Thus, you perceive we are going forward."

In the same letter, Dr. Smith referred to the competition between the Durham and Winston-Salem schools for designation as a college, which, he wrote, "has grown almost to white heat. It now looks doubtful as to the landing of the college into either of said institutions."

Indeed, history proved that Dr. E. E. Smith's institution was destined for college status, and, no doubt, when Dr. Seabrook later became president of the school, he was inspired by Dr. Smith's legacy to embark on what we know was a tremendous period of growth and progress for FSU under his leadership.

In 1961, Dr. Rudolph Jones, in his address before the Governor's Commission of Education Beyond the High School, stated: "Prior to 1960, all students who entered Fayetteville State Teachers College on a four-year program were permitted to major in elementary education only. This means that all members of the present junior and senior classes will receive degrees in elementary education."

"Beginning in 1964, we hope to graduate our first students in secondary education, with majors in biology, commercial education, English, history, physical education, physical science and sociology."

For some reason he did not include mathematics. Maybe he had already heard that Boyd Murray and I would be members of the 1960 freshman class. Thanks, however, to the work of Dr. Henry M. Eldridge, a mathematics program was developed, and I am proud that I was one of its first two graduates. It was also during this time that Fayetteville State College enrolled its first White student, Mary Pohlman, who is now a successful physician.

Thus, Fayetteville State University as we know it today was begun with the vision of Dr. Rudolph Jones. His vision was embraced by President Charles "A" Lyons, who, after FSU became a constituent institution of the University of North Carolina in 1972, served tirelessly as our first chancellor for 18 years.

During the years of Jones and Lyons the university's enrollment grew from 943 students to over 2,000,

and programs leading to master's degrees began to be offered. And, in just a short period of seven years, under the extraordinary leadership of Lloyd "Vic" Hackley, our enrollment grew by 50 percent, undergraduate degree programs increased to 38, master's degree programs increased to 17, and the institution's first doctoral program was begun.

Today, FSU boasts an enrollment of nearly 4,000. Included in this number is the class that will graduate in the year 2000. This class consists of 595 eager learners, the largest freshman class enrolled at FSU in a decade.

This Fayetteville State Class of 2000 is our future, and a bright future it promises to be. They number, as I mentioned, 595 students, a 53 percent increase in the freshman class over last year. Close to 300 of them are Chancellor's Scholars, whose continued academic achievement and community service will earn them full, four-year scholarships.

Twenty-five percent of this class graduated in the top quarter of their high school classes. Over a third of these students scored above 900 on the SAT; and 281 come from FSU's immediate service area of Cumberland, Bladen, Harnett, Hoke, Sampson and Robeson counties. Of these, 209 students are from right here in Cumberland County.

Each of these freshmen is special, because they will be Fayetteville State University's first graduates launched into the next century to pursue their post-graduate studies and chosen careers. The Class of 2000! Just four years away ...

As we head toward the 21st century, what will Fayetteville State University become? How will this institution change and adapt to reflect the technological advances that are being made every day?

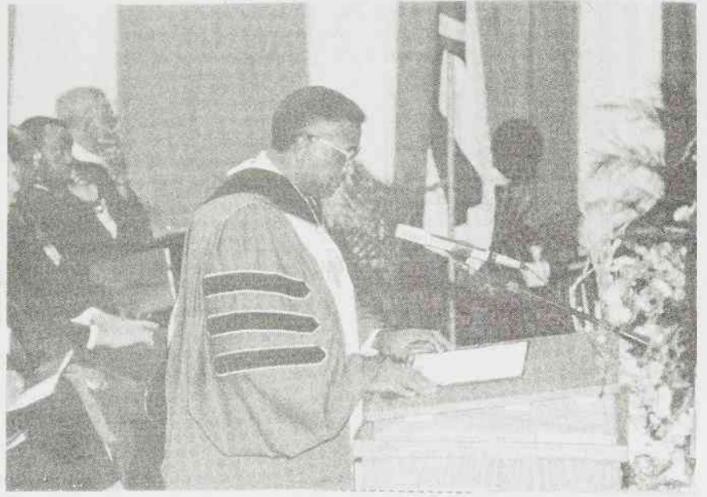
How will we cope with the virtual explosion in the amount of information that citizens in the coming millennium will be exposed to and have to absorb and process in order to remain productive and competitive?

How will Fayetteville State University deal with the numerous societal problems that seem to beset us from all quarters, in such areas as education, health, welfare, job creation, and certainly the problems of our youth, especially Black males in our community?

As a university, or if you will, a "communiversity," concerned with and involved in our community, clearly we must be leaders in seeking solutions to present-day human problems that are barriers to the kind of future we all envision.

And looking ahead, several things are clear for this university's future.

First and foremost, we must remain true to our roots as a teacher education institution. We must emphasize good teaching in the classroom, teaching that is responsive to the rapid changes in technology, not to



Dr. McLeod makes his acceptance speech

mention the ever-changing learning styles of today's students.

However, even as we change the content of what we teach to incorporate knowledge and skills relevant to the next century, we must remain true to Charles Chesnutt's vision of inspiring each of our students to "honorable ambitions." We must continue to "Point them to the heights of knowledge, and tell them how to attain them; to the temple of fame, and how to reach it."

Secondly, we cannot neglect the learning that goes on outside the classroom. To this end, we have begun our Freshman Year Initiative, whose purpose is to educate the whole student.

"FYI" will help us develop our students' abilities both as scholars and as well-rounded individuals who are ready to function competitively in the real world. "FYI" will help us produce students who are ready to become leaders of their communities, contributing to the enhanced well-being of all citizens.

"FYI" will ease our class of 2000's transition from high school to university life. It will provide the social, cultural, personal, and, of course, academic support necessary to enable our students to be successful.

From beginning to end, preschool through postgraduate studies, teaching is our business and the heart of our mission.

To this end, we have begun faculty development efforts across the university to enable our faculty to diversify and enrich their teaching skills, and to adapt new technologies for use in their classrooms, so that they may become more adept as facilitators of learning.

In support of these initiatives, I am very proud to announce that Fayetteville State University is establishing its very first endowed faculty chair, the Lloyd "Vic" Hackley Endowed Professorship.

I am deeply grateful to President Spangler, to the board of directors of the FSU Foundation, to the citizens of this community and to the General Assembly for making this first endowed chair possible.

In addition to our first endowed chair, I am just as proud to announce that the Lloyd "Vic" Hackley Scholarship Fund has grown to over \$125,000. Matched with a legislative grant of \$250,000, these funds will be used to honor our commitments to our "FIRST" students when they enter FSU in the year 2000.

"FIRST" stands for "Future Freshman Incentives — Reaching Students Today." We have nearly 300 at-risk ninth-graders from six counties enrolled in "FIRST," and have promised them their tuition for their first year of college if they maintain a record of academic and behavioral excellence and graduate from high school.

"FIRST" provides these students with hope for their future and a powerful incentive to apply themselves in middle and high school. During the next five years we plan to expand this program to encourage many more of our youth to aim toward high aspirations and achievement.

I am pleased to announce that this year we have received three new endowed scholarships that will assist us in bringing worthy students to Fayetteville State who otherwise may not be able to afford a college education.

These new scholarship funds, our newly established faculty chair, and another new development, a \$186,000 gift from the Spangler Foundation, will help launch us into an Annual Fund Campaign for Fayetteville State University that begins next week.

As we prepare to enter the 21st century, it is clear that the university must embrace the problems and opportunities of our community and actively promote those ideas and initiatives that will improve our quality of life, such as the Fayetteville Partnership, Fayetteville for Once and for All, and the upcoming referendum on public school building bonds.

We must assume a more pro-active role as a significant partner in identifying constructive solutions and working toward their implementation.

Through our School of Business and Economics, we will do more to help budding entrepreneurs and small businessmen and women learn how to manage and market their ventures, and to find the capital they need today to become the success stories of tomorrow.

Through our College of Arts and Sciences, we will build on our nursing and science programs to assist in meeting the health needs of our region. We will forge new partnerships between our criminal justice program and local law enforcement to find ways to alleviate crime. And our other liberal arts programs will pursue numerous opportunities to reach out and elevate the cultural and intellectual life of our community.

During my tenure at Fayetteville State University, our School of Education and the entire university will find new and expanded ways to reach out to and work with area public schools and community colleges. Together, our institutions of public education can and will find new methods of improving preparation of public school students for higher education or the job market. We want to build a seamless highway of educational opportunities for all. Together with our public schools and community colleges, we will find ways of ensuring that our area schools will not be affected by a nationally anticipated shortfall of over two million teachers in the next ten years.

Together, our institutions of public education can and will ensure a higher standard and quality of life for all of our citizens in the Cape Fear region. We will work smarter and harder as a team to ensure every child has the best opportunity to learn, to develop personal qualities that guarantee success, and to become a productive member of society.

Martin Luther King said he wanted to be remembered as someone who tried to help people, and he said that the best legacy we can leave our children is to leave them well-educated. That is the legacy I hope to leave to this community and this region. A big vision? Yes, but I've often said that if big visions like this are to be realized, they must begin with a series of little tries.

Every student Fayetteville State enrolls is a little try.

Every dollar raised toward scholarship funds at FSU is a little try.

Every alumnus or alumna we bring back into our fold is a little try.

Every professor who begins to use multimedia in the classroom or uses our new Distance Learning Center is a little try.

Every public school student we encourage to work a little harder and to aim a little higher is a little try.

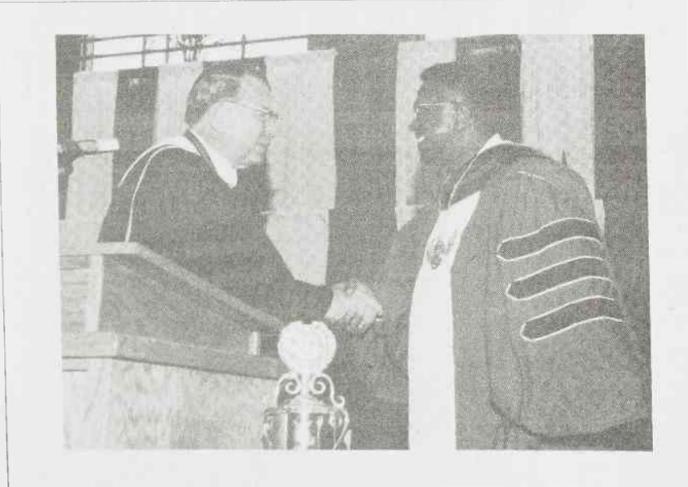
And every new program we establish jointly with a public school or a community college is a little try.

Together, these little tries add up to a big vision for Fayetteville State University's future.

I assume the responsibility for leading the university toward achieving this vision with the inspiration of the seven men who, in 1867, started with a little try ...

The Howard School, a two-story, wood-frame building on Gillespie Street, which today is Fayetteville State University with 40 buildings and 4,000 students.

Thank you very much, and may God continue to richly bless each and every one of you. *



UNC President C.D. Spangler congratulates newly installed Chancellor Dr. Willis B. McLeod

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