

Bennett gets early Christmas present

By CHERYL WILLIAMS
Chronicle Staff Writer

Dr. Richard Bennett Jr. is having Christmas in July.

Bennett says that in his new position as vice chancellor for academic affairs at Winston-Salem State University, he is like a kid with a new toy at Christmas.

"I'm so excited about being here," he says. "I see this as a tremendous challenge to me. I hope that I can make a positive contribution."

Bennett, however, who officially started his job on July 1, sees his job, not as a plaything, but as a tool to help improve the university.

He says that his basic responsibility at WSSU will be to assess the academic programs at the university.

It's hard to talk to Bennett and not have some of his zeal for education rub off.

"The only thing I know is academics," he says.

Bennett has a deep concern for the university and its students.

"The most important commodity we have is the students," he says. "That's something we must never forget here."

"Without the students, there would be no need for anything else," he says. "We don't just want them to be involved with what the band plays or whether or not we win a football game, although that is a part of college life. We want them to know they are here to study and learn."

"The only thing I want to get across to students is that they can be everything they want to be," Bennett says.

Bennett, a former professor at A&T State University, says that students need to take more responsibility for their education.

"Our kids have got to stop shuckin' and jivin' and start opening their books and burning the midnight oil so that they can be competitive," he says. "They

have to realize that we can teach them, but we can't learn them."

Bennett says that one reason he was attracted to WSSU is because he sees it as a university with excellent possibilities.

"We have the nucleus of excellence already here," he says. "We have to build on the strengths we already have. We have to come up with programmatic interventions that put to work innovative strategies to assure that we can produce quality students."

The university's goal is to produce students whom companies will beat the doors down to recruit, Bennett says.

He says another objective of the university is to continue to recruit and retain faculty members who can act as role models.

"We have to have faculty members on this campus who can say to students, 'You can be not only as successful as I am, but more successful.'"

"I think we have a fine faculty here," he adds. "And we will continue to encourage the faculty to enhance themselves. We want our faculty to know that their teaching is enhanced by involvement outside the classroom. We want them to go to seminars and professional meetings."

Bennett brings to his new job a wealth of experience.

He received his undergraduate degree in biology from Morehouse College in Atlanta and his doctorate in biochemistry from the University of California at Santa Barbara.

Bennett taught and was involved in research at Meharry Medical College in Tennessee in the early 1970s. He is one of three faculty members there who developed a Ph.D. program in biomedical sciences at the college.

It was a request to improve A&T's nursing program that brought Bennett to North Carolina.



Dr. Richard Bennett Jr.: I hope that I can make a positive contribution (photo by James Parker).

"Somehow, somebody in North Carolina got wind of the fact that there was this fellow at Meharry who was involved in this," he says. "They were trying to do some things with chemistry as far as nursing was concerned. At that time A&T and some other institutions were coming under some criticism because of the nursing programs."

"I came over to teach biochemistry and to structure the program in chemistry for the nurses at A&T," he says. "I took a one-year leave of absence from Meharry to do that."

That was 13 years ago. Bennett has been in the state since.

"I like this area and I like North Carolina," he says. "We'll be here a long time."

Bennett has also been involved in the pre-med program at Fisk University.

He was named 1984-85 Teacher of the Year for the College of Arts and Sciences at A&T.

Bennett is also a consultant to the National Institutes of Health and a past chairman of the Board of Scientific Directors of the N.C. Institute of Nutrition.

Bennett has done a lot and he's proud of it all, but none of the things he has done can compare

with the pride he feels for his family.

Bennett, 47, has been married for 26 years, and he says they have all been happy years.

"If I took everything into perspective, the thing I'm most proud of is the fact that while at Morehouse, I met a young lady who was at Spelman College," he says. "Twenty-six years ago she agreed to put up with me for the rest of her life."

"She's the best thing that ever happened to me," he says. "She's my best friend, and I say that with pride."

Bennett and his wife, Evelyn, have six children ranging in age from 14 to 24 years old.

When Bennett has time for leisure, he says he enjoys playing golf, working in his lab and being with his family.

Bennett feels that he is ready for whatever lies ahead in his new position. He has experience and family support to back him up.

He also has a philosophy.

"Every day that the good Lord gives us, we ought to try to do something productive," he says. "We ought to leave work with a good feeling, so we will want to come back the next day."

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Council on teen pregnancy meets in Winston-Salem

By CHERYL WILLIAMS
Chronicle Staff Writer

The Council on Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention is being revived, and the Forsyth County Health Department held a meeting last month for those interested in taking part.

A similar council operated during the late 1970s and early 1980s, said Pheon E. Beal, a health educator with the department.

More than 60 people attended the meeting, said Ms. Beal, who also is director of the department's Teen Initiative Project. There were people representing agencies present, as well as

clergy, parents, health professionals and teen-agers.

The council is being reorganized with the aid of a special grant from the state, Ms. Beal said.

"We are organizing this council for the purpose of sharing information about prevention, to coordinate actions in the community and to identify ways to meet the community's needs," Ms. Beal said.

"The former council did some good things," she said. "It was very effective. They had a tough job at that time because the community was not as aware of adolescent pregnancy."

"The public was not as open to talking about it," she continued. "Since that time there has been a national awareness as well as a local (one)."

A panel discussion at the meeting featured area people giving their perspectives on teen pregnancy, Ms. Beal said.

Speakers included the Rev. Wendell Johnson, pastor of First Baptist Church on Highland Avenue, who spoke on the church's viewpoint on adolescent pregnancy; the mother of two teen-age boys, who spoke about her experiences; a 19-year-old mother who had a child when she

was 15 years old, and Charlene Miller, nurse coordinator at the Optional Education Center, who spoke from the perspective of a care provider.

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Brown From Page A1

"He's the kind of person who can bring people together," he said. "If that's what the Reagan administration wants, then Brown can bring this quality to that position."

Brown, 51, would succeed Herman Nickel, who is now on home leave.

Earlier this year, Brown led a group of black educators to South Africa to help develop a U.S. program for training teachers and otherwise improving education opportunities for blacks in the country.

Although he is a Republican, Brown was the host of a fund-raising event for Jesse Jackson at his High Point home during Jackson's 1984 presidential bid.

Brown said then that Jackson was a longtime friend and predicted that he would win the Democratic presidential primary in North Carolina.

The administration source said there were other candidates under consideration as well. These were understood to include Richard Viets, 55, a career foreign service officer who was the U.S. ambassador to Jordan.

A nominee for the post would have to be confirmed by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, of which Republican Sen. Jesse Helms of North Carolina is the second-ranking member.

At the White House, spokesman Edward Djere-

jian, asked about the report, first published in this week's *Time* magazine, that Brown would succeed Nickel, replied, "We have no comment on presidential appointments."

Brown would be the first black envoy to the white-ruled country. A black, John Burroughs, is the consul general in Capetown.

Nickel left South Africa last week for a month-long vacation in Europe and the United States. He has served four years in the post, a year longer than usual in the Pretoria assignment.

State Department officials said Nickel had not been recalled and that his absence from South Africa was not related to consideration of a successor.

A vacation for Nickel was overdue, and Brown and others have been under consideration for the post for months, officials said.

The Reagan administration is in the midst of reassessing its policy toward South Africa in order to bring an end to the system of racial segregation known as apartheid.

Chester A. Crocker, the assistant secretary of state for African affairs, cautioned last week that U.S. ability to influence events in the country was "at the margin." He rejected calls for stringent sanctions.

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