

The Future of Chowan

An address delivered by Dr. Bruce E. Whitaker, President,
at beginning of 1978-79 academic session.

recently I read in Forbes magazine an account of an after dinner speech made in September, 1956, by the late distinguished chairman of RCA, David Sarnoff. It was called "Twenty Years From Now: A Forecast." It dealt with "Twenty Major Developments Likely to Affect All Of Us" in 20 years. Most of what he talked about, other than in his special field of television, he either under estimated or over estimated. The editor of Forbes indicated, in light of the Sarnoff projections, "When you get the urge to predict the future, you had better lie down until the feeling goes away!"

Be that as it may, I am happy to have the opportunity to share some impressions and reflections with you who are my colleagues and for whom I have a kindred spirit—some reflections about the future of "our college." I must add, however, that I have been in this business long enough to appreciate what the souls in Dante's *Inferno* learned to their sorrow: they could see clearly what lay far in the future, but things blurred as they drew nearer.

Chowan is both an old and new college. Founded in 1848 as Chowan Female Institute, it served its day and time admirably until 1943 when its doors were closed until 1949. It has been since 1949 that Chowan has served and graduated far more students than in all of its history prior to that date. Chowan IS both an old and a new college. First, it served only women and as a four year college. Then beginning in 1931 it became a co-educational college and, in 1937, a two-year college.

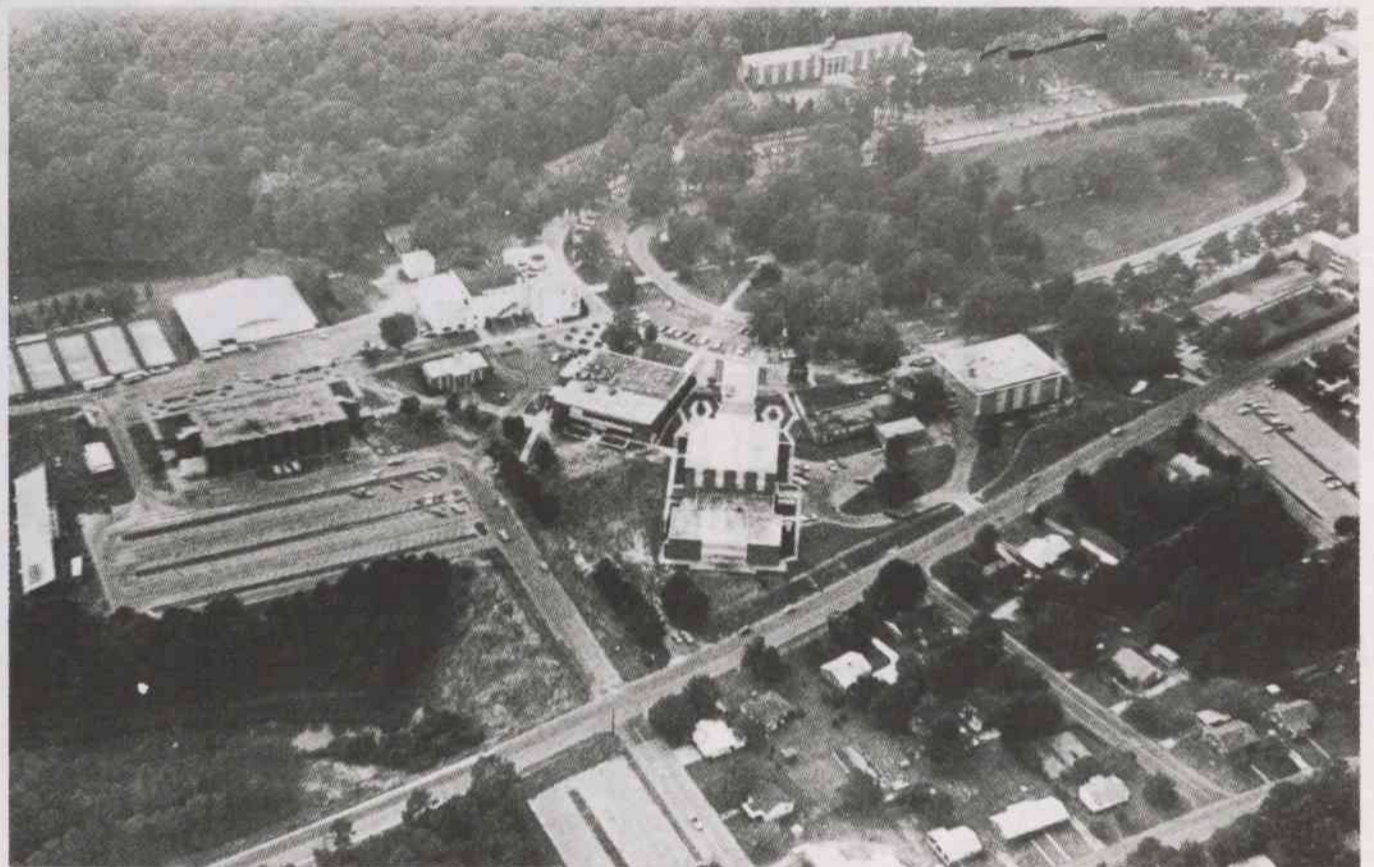
All of us know something of the Chowan of today. Based on objective educational measurements, it is one of the top two-year independent colleges in the nation—to wit, the size and quality of our library, our physical facilities, and the training and experience of our faculty and staff. The one point where we are most vulnerable is that of the size of our General Endowment.

The financial future of the college continues to look bright.

We have just completed another fiscal year in the black. We have now operated in the black for the last 20 consecutive years. This is an accomplishment which can be matched by few other independent colleges in North Carolina, or across the national for that matter. This has not just happened; it is the result of a number of factors. One of them is good planning and management. The fact that members of the college community have demonstrated a "Cost consciousness," to include the conservation of energy, is a definite factor. The relatively new Annual Giving Fund has in many ways proved to be "the difference" in recent years. The overarching factor has been, without any question, the annual financial support which we enjoy from the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina; from the Convention during 1978 we anticipate income of approximately \$350,000, this both for operational and capital needs.

The endowment of the college now exceeds \$1,000,000; 21 years ago it was less than \$6,000. We have reason to believe, that we are included in a number of wills. The building of a strong general endowment fund, over a period of years, coupled with assured support from the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina and an increased Annual Giving Fund, will "make the difference" across the years to come from an operational point of view.

In this latter regard, we will continue to



Aerial View of Chowan College Campus

—Photo by Bill Garrett

depend on student fees for most of our revenue for the foreseeable future, though hopefully the rate will at least be stabilized if not reduced.

Enrollment is crucial to the future of Chowan, as it is at all private colleges, two-year or four-year.

The enrollment situation appears to have stabilized, at least for the time being. With hard work and cooperation on the part of everyone at Chowan we believe that we can keep our enrollment at about 1,000-1,050 level during the difficult days of the 1980's.

Obviously, the high school and college age population is set, for they are already born and alive. A *Fact Book on Higher Education*, American Council on Education (first issue, 1975), deals with the traditional college age population. Beginning in 1979 the population of this age will decrease in the United States, each and every year, through 1984. Moreover, according to the *Chronicle of Higher Education* study, the high school graduate group will decrease from 3,139,000 in 1976-77 to 2,680,000 in 1984-85.

Moreover, the National Center for Education Statistics of HEW indicates that by 1986 the total number of high school graduates in the United States will decrease by 2,681,000.

With respect to the population profile for North Carolina, ages 15-24, the National Planning Associates, Regional Economic Projection Series Area Profile for North Carolina, 1975, reflect for the period 1975-80 an increase of 1.5 percent; 1980-85 a decrease of 7.9 percent, or from 1,080,300 to 995,200; and between 1985 and 1990, a decrease of 8.4 percent or from 995,200 to 911,200.

To further compound the problem, according to a 1977 research report from the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (openings, closings,

mergers and accreditation status of independent colleges and universities), during the period of spring 1970-fall 1976, 113 independent colleges and branch campuses closed; 37 two-year colleges, 39 four-year colleges, and 37 specialized institutions.

In addition to the closings during this period, 39 independent colleges and branch campuses merged with other independent institutions. Furthermore, 15 independent colleges shifted to public control; six two-year colleges, five four-year colleges, and four specialized institutions. But from spring 1970 through fall 1976, 216 independent institutions and branch campuses obtained accredited status from nationally recognized accrediting agencies. And during this same period, other than institutions which closed, no independent institution lost accreditation.

It is helpful to know the facts, with respect to the higher education scene in the United States involving private colleges, whether it involves the number of "Warm bodies" of the traditional college age, the number of anticipated high school graduates, and the nature and size of the institutions which have closed with a seven-eight year period. In the latter regard, to me the figures are instructive.

They do point out the fact that we must do everything ethically possible in order to see to it that our enrollment holds up and that we operate the institution in the black; they are inexorably related. This involves effective efforts in behalf of both recruitment and retention by the entire college community.

Academic Program

The college will remain essentially a liberal arts college, with strong programs in the humanities, arts, sciences, and pre-professional fields. At the same time, we will continue, gladly, to offer vocational programs against a backdrop of the liberal arts. The college will continue to strengthen

existing programs, adding new programs as a need is demonstrated and, if necessary, dropping programs when a need no longer exists. Of course, we must and will offer only those programs that it can adequately fund.

The college will continue to encourage all segments of the college community to participate in curriculum review and revision by making recommendations through appropriate channels. We cannot and will not become stagnant with respect to our academic offerings.

In view of the fact that 80-85 percent of our graduates will go on to senior institutions, and that the reputation of Chowan depends in some measure on how well the students succeed in their senior institutions, we will emphasize our "teaching" function coupled with sound academic advisement. Sound instruction and good preparation will be stressed, equally, in our vocational programs.

Faculty

In terms of academic credentials, the faculty continues to exceed the minimum standards of the College Delegate Assembly, SACS. I believe that we have been able to add even further strength through those new faculty members who have joined us this year. We shall continue to make every effort to recruit qualified faculty members, who are compatible with the basic purpose of the college, and who are dedicated to the development of young lives to their fullest potential through the teaching profession.

Facilities

With the construction of the new gymnasium-physical education center, the college will have an excellent physical plant to support its various programs. Beyond this, the college does not foresee the necessi-

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