

New chancellor shares plans and impressions

Interview by Penny Kramp

Newly installed Chancellor David Brown talked recently to the Banner about his feelings concerning UNCA's present and his hopes for the university's future.

Brown, 49, holds a master's degree and doctorate in economics from Princeton University. He formerly served as president of Transylvania University and executive vice-president for academic affairs at Miami University.

He and his wife, Lin, have two children, Alison and Dirk.

During the seven months you have been at UNCA, what has made the greatest impression on you?

I think one of the things I've been most impressed with has been the quality of faculty and students. That is one of the reasons I came to UNCA.

What has been the most surprising discovery you have made about the student population?

By and large, we have a rather remarkable student body; remarkable in the sense, it is so diversified. One of biggest surprises was when we formed the Chancellor's Colloquium. We went through 80 applications and came up with 37 people.

I expected that the majority of those students would be between the ages of 18 and 21, and would have the normal profile of a normal college student. And there are people in the colloquium who meet that profile.

But I am also finding people who have bachelor's degrees; finding people who have run rodeos; people who run companies and conference centers.

I am finding that our student body is a group from which I can learn so much.

What makes UNCA unique compared to the colleges at which you previously taught?

This is one of the most age diverse student bodies in the country. We are by far the oldest undergraduate student body in the state.



CHANCELLOR DAVID BROWN dons his robe and hat to march in the installation procession. Staff photo by Penny Kramp

One of the interesting things that I just discovered about the campus in the last two weeks is that we have a higher percentage of graduate students on campus than they have at North Carolina State University.

If you count the pairs of legs around campus, you will discover that 18 percent of the people that take at least one class on this campus are graduate students. That percentage at Greensboro and Chapel Hill is about 25 percent and we are third in the state.

Why do you think older students are attracted to UNCA?

I think it is mainly because we don't have residence halls.

Another reason is a large number of students start elsewhere and then come here. They go away thinking they're going to find something better than the university that has become familiar to them; and they find out it is not better and it is both easier and less expensive to come back here.

You mentioned the lack of residence halls. Would you like to see UNCA expand in the future?

I would like to see us move in the next 10 years from 500 residence hall beds to about 1500 residence hall beds.

My own conviction is that educational research shows students learn most on campus. I think it would be to the advantage

of all students, both those in residence and those commuting, to have a fuller campus life.

Connected to that is the amount of students that are needed to support extras, like a new library, an indoor recreation center, and a language lab.

We need a greater justification and greater financial ability to provide these kinds of services.

How much of a problem is the budget? Does UNCA need more methods of raising money?

The answer to that is yes. We have substantial funding for our base budget from the state.

Where UNCA needs to increase its effort is in the area of physical facilities, private donations, and foundation grants. The dollars that are generated by private donations and foundation grants are rarely a large portion of the budget. If we are doing very well, we are talking maybe 10 to 15 percent of the budget.

It's that icing on the cake that allows a university to have an enhanced respect for itself.

You have certainly been in the news a great deal this year with the McDevitt hiring and the Ed Harris resignation. Have these been a source of frustration for you?

Whenever a chancellor of over 20 years leaves, no matter who follows, things are going to have to be done differently. The

change plays on people's anxieties and they tend to read tones of voice as having meaning.

I guess I look at Ed Harris' resignation as one of the fallouts. I was very surprised by that. I don't know why Ed left. He may have thought the new chancellor could change his life for the better, or a new opportunity may have just come along.

The McDevitt affair has caused some frustration in as much as there has been that nagging feeling of "How could I have done that differently?" We got a lot of bad press but Wayne has been very good.

The hardest part of Monday morning quarterbacking is we have to learn we can't replay things.

When did you know you wanted to be a chancellor?

I had a sense I would enjoy holding a major position 20 years ago. I didn't want to make a move before my children were in high school. I felt it was unfair to disrupt both our kids so I didn't really consider any positions until my daughter graduated from high school.

What does the installation ceremony mean to you?

The installation is a wonderful opportunity for the university to have attention focused on it. Dave Brown is only a vehicle for that focus, in the sense that we're using my personhood as a means of achieving university

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