

## Dr. Collier leaves Chowan after many accomplishments, establishing challenges, making many new friends

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**W**HEN he came to serve as Chowan College's interim president, Dr. Herman Collier never expected to become so personally attached.

Collier's last day at the helm of the Baptist College was May 31, and he left after accomplishing quite a bit.

Many would say he has helped create a sense of community cohesiveness that was lacking before.

In fact, he said when he first arrived one of the faculty members alluded to this being "a time for healing."

Collier revealed, "This same person saw me on the campus recently and told me it had happened, which gave me real satisfaction."

When he came to Chowan in August of 1995, he met with the faculty and staff and suggested what he believed were the mandates for the college, which mainly involved readying it for the next administration.

But along the way, he decided to be ambitious and "define the critical ingredients" needed for the identity of Chowan.

Collier explained, "This business of trying to be like the top drawer colleges in the country — of the 1500 in the country, half are hanging on by their fingernails."

"Here we are with not a lot of history, in terms of four-year status," he continued. "We could be bold with what this college could become and focus on the most effective learning experience."

He maintained that he wanted to focus on the student and get away from programs and faculty.

"Everybody seemed to think that was wonderful," Collier remembered.

Basically, it all came down to attitude.

Collier said he was "not being prescriptive for the ingredients of what Chowan's programs should be" but rather preparing staff and faculty.

"We had a huge opportunity," he explained. "There was no reason why we couldn't stop and decide which path to take."

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*Plans made to increase computer access on campus by a network interconnection and the automation of Whitaker Library*

Collier does feel that he's done some good things.

For instance, he mentioned the naming of David Gowler as assistant dean for curriculum development, to take the load off Dr. Franklin Lowe, vice president for academic affairs.

"He (Gowler) will be the wagon master for the transformation to a new academic identity," Collier maintained.

He said an institution like Chowan is really at risk.

"The financial hurt one can realize in one year's time is astronomical," asserted Collier.

"That wasn't true in years back. The future for a college today needs to be addressed aggressively," he said, "there's a window of



DR. HERMAN E. COLLIER JR.  
Addressing faculty and staff

opportunity," he stressed.

Collier said his task was to help ready the institution. "I think we've done that," he said.

However, there are several other things for which he is proud.

The main one is helping in the creation of a college wide network enabling Chowan to become a leader in educational technology.

Collier said, "This will enable the school system to have access to the world through us. We could be a resource."

He likened it to another example of "community hand-holding."

The plan is to increase computer access on campus by a campuswide network interconnection and the automation of Whitaker Library.

This will make library resources, electronic mail and external information resources, such as Internet, available across the campus.

Students, faculty, staff and the community will have access to the information that only a major urban university could have provided in the past.

Future plans are to provide Internet training, making networked classrooms and labs available to area schools, share information resources, provide technical support and host educational demonstrations and seminars.

Collier said the plan came about because of the expertise of the faculty and staff at Chowan.

He said he and some staff members went to Gov. James Hunt's office recently and met with Jane Patterson, who deals with technology.

He said he wanted to meet with her for two reasons: To find out what she thought of Chowan's plans and to counsel them as far as financial support.

She told the Chowan contingent it was one of the finest presentations she'd seen.

"The people here are rather gifted and have put the architecture all together for this project," he boasted.

Collier came to Chowan after trustee member Clement Yancey's wife, who is a trustee at North Carolina Wesleyan College, asked him to come look the campus over.

"I said well, all right, even though I was thinking how good I am at retirement," he laughed.

"In my heart and imagination, I was thinking

I'd find a worn out place with not too much magic.

"When I came in on Union Street, passed the Helms Center and was looking at this magnificent campus," he revealed, "well, my imagination was as far wrong as it could be."

He continued, "Then I met the people. They were so receptive and I thought this might just be a unique opportunity."

"I've been to lots of places, but I've never been at the very birth of one," he said, alluding to four-year status for Chowan. "So it was challenging and inviting."

Another thing that has been important to Collier is the reception he has received from the Baptist Association members.

"I've never been associated with Baptists," he explained. "I attend the Methodist Church but I'm actually a displaced Moravian."

"Everyone has been very kind, and I even spoke to the Baptist Convention last November about Chowan," he said.

Collier is originally from St. Louis, Mo., and is married to the former Jerri L. Weston.

He received his B.S. degree in Chemistry from Randolph-Macon College and his M.S. in Inorganic Chemistry and Ph.D. in Analytical Chemistry from Lehigh University.

He has been president at Moravian College (1969-86), president and co-director of I&I

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Planning associates (1987-Present), interim president at Salem Academy and College (Feb. 1991-July 1991), and interim president of N.C. Wesleyan College (July 1994-June 1995).

He chaired a subcommittee appointed by former U. S. President Ronald Reagan to study high-level radioactive waste disposal and just finished a stint as director of Bethlehem Steel Corporation.

He and his wife own a home at Point Harbor across the Currituck Sound from Kitty Hawk, and the couple has three adult sons living in Greensboro, Boston and Tacoma, Wash.

In conclusion, Collier said he feels that he has gotten more out of this interim presidency than he has given.

To the community and the college he said, "Thanks for being as wonderful as you have been."

He stressed that of the many experiences he and his wife have shared and enjoyed, "Murfreesboro and Chowan might have topped it off."

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