

Inauguration Speech  
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Today is an important one for me. I am charged with the responsibility of leading a major University which has affected the lives of many people and which certainly will continue to do so in the future. Indeed, the University is poised to have a major impact on this community, this State and nation, and this world.

As I accept the challenge of leadership, a number of friends and supporters are here as witnesses. To all of you, I sincerely appreciate your presence and expressions of support.

I welcome this responsibility as the seventh successor to our founder, Dr. James E. Shepard. Dr. Shepard led this institution through many trying years and established a foundation that each of his successors has tried to emulate. Dr. Alfonso Elder, Dr. Samuel Massie, Dr. Albert Whiting, Dr. LeRoy Walker, Dr. Tyronza Richmond, and Dr. Donna Bensen left their own distinguishing and significant marks as did two Interim Committees in 1947-1948 and 1966-1967. This University and State will be eternally grateful to all of these leaders for what they have meant to the University and to the many students whose lives they have touched.

My predecessors have presented a daunting challenge. But Mr. President, members of the Board of Governors, members of NCCU's Board of Trustees, students of NCCU, faculty, staff, alumni and friends, I very much appreciate this opportunity and the trust you have placed in me. I must tell you, however, that in responding, I am guided by an old philosopher:

I am tired of sailing my boat  
Far inside the harbor bar.  
I want to go out where the big ships float,  
Out on the deep where the great ones are.  
And should my frail craft prove too slight  
For waves that sweep those billows o'er,  
I'd rather go down in the stirring fight  
Than drown to death by the sheltered shore.

I view my first responsibility as serving the needs and interests of students whose lives we take in trust. We serve them by addressing the total students – their academic preparation as well as their social and cultural development. Our campus and our programs must be designed with these broad objectives in mind.

We would like our graduates, within four years, to be distinctly NCCU – academically prepared to meet any challenge whether in graduate or professional school or at work; self confident with experience, exposure, and training, and with a commitment not only to themselves but to service for individuals and for communities.

In order to produce these graduates, I hope we focus, at least initially, on four broad areas – the quality and commitment of the students we admit and for whom we provide educational opportunities; the preparation and commitment of our faculty and staff; the programs, facilities and environment we offer our students, our faculty and staff; and the services rendered by our students and the University to our community.

I know the historical role NCCU has played over the years in educating North Carolina youth. I am a product, a proud and thankful one, of that effort. We must continue to serve that constituency, but North Carolina has grown over the years. We are more diverse and our world is much larger. The identification of those we serve must accordingly be broader.

Moreover, we have gone through some major changes in our history. We have demanded respect and opportunities. Every person must, therefore, be prepared to carry his or her own weight. We should expect all of our students to, in Justice Marshall's words, "[do] the best they can do with what they have."

In this connection, I am further persuaded by Arthur Ashe that all students, minority and non-minority, can and will excel if they know what is expected. Consequently, I hope that NCCU will insist on higher admission standards for our students and, within the next year, will

increase our average SAT score to 900. Some will say that this score is high and that it may adversely affect opportunities for minority students. It is a high goal, but I do not believe it will adversely affect minority students.

First, I believe that minority students are just as capable as anyone else in educational pursuits. We can do anything we set our minds to do. Second, I am not suggesting that we close the doors to those who do not score 900 on the SAT. We are seeking an average.

Moreover, I know a number of minority students who score well above 900 on the SAT. I hope we concentrate more on these students and become competitive with Chapel Hill and Duke and Harvard and Florida A & M in recruiting them.

I also hope that we concentrate more on the complete education of our student. We should ensure the best academic exposure, new and exceptional job training and research opportunities and cultural and social experiences so that our students will leave this institution prepared and sure of themselves.

But for every student we admit, I hope we have in place the resources and programs that will guarantee that each is afforded opportunities for full growth, for fair and respectful treatment. For more than anything, these are the primary objectives of this institution.

Second, I hope we ensure an attractive and inviting work environment for our faculty. I am proud of our faculty and staff, but they must be compensated adequately and provided the resources, facilities, and accommodations they need to do their jobs. In return, we should expect of our faculty and staff the preparation and commitment necessary for us to prepare our students effectively.

Of course, we must do more research and writing and today more teaching, but I hope we focus as well as on how to use the knowledge we impart to improve our society and world. I

appreciate scholarship and learning in the abstract, but it is more important to me to ensure that all subjects are made relevant to our students and leaders as they go about their work and daily lives.

In order to help us attract more faculty and focus on using our skills and knowledge in research and in addressing today's problems, we have begun with efforts to endow faculty positions in each Department and School of the University. We hope within the next three years to fund at least ten endowed professorships.

We have also attempted to promote more faculty exchanges and collaborative programs with Chapel Hill and Duke. We will do more in this connection because it is beneficial to NCCU as well as to Chapel Hill and Duke and the students we serve. We have a wealth of talent in this area and should take advantage of it.

Third, we must review more carefully the programs we offer; we must improve our facilities and our campus environment.

It may be that an intense review will suggest that some of our programs are not necessary or effective, or that more programs should be developed, or that alternative and more appropriate degrees should be offered.

For example, how do we improve our students' performance on the general knowledge section of the National Teacher's Examination? How do we move our programs and emphases from those developed thirty years ago? How do we measure or determine if students learn what we teach? What is the focus or objective of our graduate programs? What happens to our graduates when they leave the University?

In short, we can no longer remain comfortable with our successes but must continuously review what we are doing, the objectives we are trying to achieve, and the level of our accomplishments. I am not overly critical of our programs, but I believe in continuous review

and in being prepared to demonstrate the effectiveness of our programs and the critical needs which they serve.

We have begun with efforts in this connection. We are now reviewing our total academic program. We are developing and expanding our research capabilities. We hope to build and staff, within the next two years, a major Biomedical-Biotechnology Research Center. We are pursuing membership in the Research Triangle Library Network with Duke, Chapel Hill and North Carolina State. We are seeking membership in MCNC, North Carolina's super computer center. We will participate more actively in the National Institute of Health, the Environmental Protection Agency, North Carolina's Biotechnology Center and in the several businesses in the Research Triangle Park.

We are moving to improve our facilities. Too many of our buildings are unusable or need extensive renovations, or, like Gymnasium, are simply inadequate. Our students, faculty and staff are cramped in spaces that make learning and research simply impossible. Many of our faculty are without telephones or computers or necessary leave time or travel expenses. We can not attract or retain faculty or students with these kinds of inadequacies. Fortunately, President Spangler and the State are committed to improving NCCU and have already begun to assist with needed facilities and improvements. You will vote on the Bond Referendum on November 2. This issue is critical for NCCU and for the University of North Carolina. I hope each of you will support this Referendum.

Fourth, last week, we began a community service program that will enable our students, faculty and staff to reach out and help build a better community. I agree wholeheartedly with the News and Observer series that our colleges and universities, all of them, must do more to help our community, our State, and our nation address the crises of crime and poverty and hopelessness. These devastating social problems divide our people and become eating cancers in our society.

How can we promote an outstanding institution located in the midst of poverty? How can we ensure the safety of our students and staff with murder and crime all about us? How can we seriously talk about nutrition or history or math and watch hunger, ill health, and illiteracy just across the street?

I sincerely believe that we can rejoice with our accomplishments only when our friends and neighbors, here and across this nation, are literate and well fed, have a desire to succeed in life and a belief that they can succeed in this system. I trust through out community outreach we will begin to provide this hope, and our students, our faculty and staff will be as committed as I in pursuing this objective.

These goals obviously are not achievable unless we have the support of the University community, our alumni and friends. I assume this responsibility at an opportune time when the General Administration and the State are committed to building a better NCCU. I am equally pleased and excited with the hopes and support I have received from our Board, our students, faculty, and staff. I, at least, begin with enormous support and hopes and with an institutional history of scholarship, of excellence and truth and service.

I am not alone in this venture and am confident that the fifty million dollar capital campaign we will announce in November will succeed. I know that each of you would like to see this institution succeed as the nation's leading undergraduate liberal arts University. I know that you will support our endowed professor's fund, the endowment of scholarships for needy students which will enable us to compete and attract some of the best minds of NCCU. I know that you will support our efforts to become more involved in service to our community and State. For I, too, dream with Dr. Shepard, Dr. Martin Luther King, and Justice Thurgood Marshall that NCCU will continue as a beacon of light for the youth we serve, that through our efforts we will produced a community and nation where all people are free of bigotry and hate, of hunger and

illiteracy. That was a dream at the beginning of this institution. I know, with your help, we will extend that vision and move the torch to a new height in our history.