

**State of the University Address
McDougald – McLendon Gymnasium
September 30, 2011, 9:15 a.m.
Charlie Nelms, Chancellor**

Good morning!

As many of you may have heard, I recently celebrated my 65th birthday, a retirement milestone for many.

Thanks to my colleagues in Institutional Advancement and Student Affairs,

I celebrated by dancing the night away with anyone

who would accept the invitation to take the floor with me.

Although I have a lot of work to do to update my dance moves, I had a ton of fun

and we raised nearly 15 thousand dollars for scholarships

that Jeanetta and I intend to match.

By the way, if there are those among you prepared to teach your chancellor a Baby Boomer version of the Wobble,

Cooking or the Jig,

please email two of NCCU's best party organizers, Lamisa McCoy or Anita Walton at your earliest convenience.

I learned about these new dances from Mel, Raven and Tim, all of whom are in the audience today.

Now, let me put the Charlie Nelms retirement rumor to rest.

I have too much energy, passion and determination to make a difference in the corner of the world

that matters to me the most,

and that's North Carolina Central University, to retire.

There are too many unaddressed challenges and opportunities to walk away from what is arguably

one of the best jobs in higher education.

Yes, the job is stressful and it's challenging but it's equally exciting and rewarding.

My next career, along with golfing and skydiving, can wait a few years longer!

In the months leading up to my milestone birthday, I spent a lot of time reflecting on the truths that have shaped my life:

The first of these is the unswerving belief that education is the engine of opportunity.

The second is that advocacy and voting matter.

The third is that it is possible to do well and to do good.
It's not a matter of one or the other.

Graduation must be every student's destination.

Anything less is not an option.

Students, it's not just about you.

It has to do with the needs of our community, our state and our nation.

We need a more educated citizenry, period.

Freedom, economic prosperity, political stability all demand an educated citizenry.

Before proceeding, let me pause to recognize those members of the NCCU executive leadership team

who've joined us since the 2010 Convocation

and whose roles are critical to the success of the university,

Vice Chancellors Debbie Thomas, Wendell Davis and Lois Deloatch.

As I reflected upon the themes of my previous State of the University speeches, and what I might talk about today,

a passage from *A Tale of Two Cities* by British novelist Charles Dickens came to mind.

In that wonderful novel, Dickens wrote,

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness,

it was the epoch of belief,
it was the epoch of incredulity,
it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope,
it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us.”

This opening paragraph eloquently captures what I see as the state of our university
as we enter the second decade of the 21st century.

The best of times at NCCU is reflected in the quality of students we are attracting.

Because of the hard work by Vice Chancellor Kevin Rome,

Associate Vice Chancellor Sharon Oliver and Director of Admissions Anthony Brooks
and their teams,

this year’s freshmen are among the best-prepared entering students in more than a
decade.

With an average incoming GPA of 3.02, there is no reason why you can’t make your
Destination Graduation.

The best of NCCU can be seen in the success of our graduates.

Just last week we heard that another one of our graduates from the School of
Education,

Tammy Hedge-path was proclaimed Teacher of the Year for Halifax County.

I encourage you to take a moment to visit our campus Museum to see the amazing
sculpture installation

Cash Crop by NCCU alumnus Stephen Hayes.

Faculty like Dr. Darlene Taylor, assistant professor of chemistry,

are helping NCCU become a more research intensive institution.

This month, Dr. Taylor received nearly a half-million dollars from the National
Science Foundation

to conduct soft matter research.

In the project supervised by Taylor, NCCU faculty and students will develop ways to change the structure and properties of polymers and gels using heat, electricity and mechanical force.

This is just one example of our sponsored research efforts.

Under the capable leadership of Dr. Hazell Reed, vice chancellor for research and economic development,

Our sponsored research grants increased by 19 percent last year, totaling more than \$25 million.

And if Dr. Taylor's success is any indication, we are off to a great start again this year.

I would also like to call your attention to three members of the faculty and staff who were selected

as fellows to the State University of New York's

Center for Collaborative Online International Learning Institute.

Leading the NCCU team was Lenora Helm, a music professor who is also an accomplished jazz performer.

She was joined by Emmanuel Oritsejafor, director of the Office of International Affairs,

and Dan Reis, multimedia designer in the Center for Teaching and Learning.

They will work to create and team-teach a course in jazz for students from universities in Europe and Africa.

The Institute is a three-year project funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Congratulations to professor Helm and the members of her team.

All of us benefit from the major improvements in the aesthetics and amenities on campus.

On Wednesday, we cut the ribbon on two, extraordinary new facilities.

The spacious new Chidley North Residence Hall accommodates 517 juniors and seniors,

most of whom share a room and a bath with only one other student.

The 135,000-square-foot hall has lounges, a kitchen, laundry room, and study areas on every floor.

Now that's campus living!

And I am even more excited about the new nursing facility!

It's 69,000 square feet of first-class teaching and research space, and it's fully equipped with state-of-the-art technology.

I have to take a second look when I see those life-like mannequins that simulate human patients.

Dr. Dennis, I know they're not mannequins but rather, iStan human patient simulators!

This building will serve as a magnet to recruit students from all across the state.

My profound thanks go to Associate Vice Chancellor Zack Abegunrin

and his team for ensuring that those two buildings opened on schedule and within budget.

That was a tremendous job!

Nursing students, you have no excuse!

You'll be fully prepared for the hospital floor because you have an exact replica here on campus.

I expect an N-CLEX pass rate of no less than 100 percent.

In the last several years, the nursing faculty has grown to 24 full-time members, of whom eight possess terminal degrees.

With these new faculty, a new leader in Dr. Betty Dennis, and a new building, we intend to significantly increase our enrollment over the next several years.

We also intend to grow the RN-to-BSN program and to work collaboratively

with the community colleges of North Carolina to do that.

I sincerely hope you have all heard the news that NCCU is now a full member of NCAA Division I athletics.

The five-year reclassification process moving from Division II was completed this past summer,

and the Eagles are eligible to participate in post-season championships starting this fall.

I appreciate what a tremendous effort this was for Athletic Director, Dr. Ingrid Wicker-McCree and her entire team,

and I thank and congratulate them for the superb job they did.

Now the football team is playing a full conference schedule against eight MEAC opponents.

The Eagles have arrived!

But it's up to you to support them.

Our next home game is October 15th at 4 p.m. against Morgan State

and I want to see all of you there, cheering with me in the stands.

Did you know they have the "Charlie Cam" on the big screen?

Check it out!

It's clearly the best of times when we asked our students to volunteer their time for Make A Difference Day,

And 740 got up early on a rainy Saturday morning to pick up trash in the surrounding neighborhoods.

When we asked our students to volunteer their time for Eagle 4, our fourth project with Habitat for Humanity,

so many showed up, the homeowner was overcome with gratitude.

North Carolina Central University is a mission-driven institution that cherishes its motto of Truth and Service.

And I am delighted that our story seems to be reaching a broader audience.

More and more, we're gaining national recognition for what we do best, and that is taking students from where they are to where they need to be.

Last year, the Southern Regional Education Board recognized us as one of only 15 public bachelor's- and master's-level universities across the country that presented a better than expected six-year graduation rate, given the number of students who come to us with less than stellar academic credentials.

This semester, we received four more national recognitions.

First, NCCU was one of 32 colleges and universities cited in a national survey funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation titled Beating the Odds.

This small group of institutions was acknowledged for graduating low-wealth students in greater-than-expected numbers.

Kristin Conklin, founding partner of the organization that conducted the research, praised NCCU and the other institutions for beating expectations, ensuring student success and assisting in the economic recovery of our nation.

Next, the *Washington Monthly* ranked NCCU in the top-40 of more than 600 master's-level universities in the country for our contributions to the public good.

To arrive at the overall ranking, the Washington publication combined measures of social mobility, referring to the recruitment and graduation of low-wealth students, research and service.

For two years in a row, NCCU was the top public HBCU, according to *U.S. News & World Report*.

Now we're tied for No. 2 with another North Carolina university.

But I have a good feeling about 2012.

The fourth and last national recognition we received this fall was garnered by our Law School.

In the latest rankings compiled by preLaw magazine, a National Jurist Publication, the NCCU School of Law placed fourth in the nation in providing clinical opportunities for our students.

The ranking is based on the ratio of full-time clinical positions available.

NCCU's law school manages 12 law clinics, which pair law students with low-income North Carolinians

who need pro bono help with everything from home foreclosure to their defense of criminal charges.

And the School of Law is now able to offer assistance across the state

through the use of its brand new telepresence classroom.

With an entire wall of video screens, it is truly like being there for participants seated in classrooms at four partner HBCUs

in Winston-Salem, Fayetteville, Greensboro, and Elizabeth City.

I've never been a particular fan of rankings because for years, they seemed oblivious to the diverse nature of the institutions they reviewed.

Although far from perfect, these recent rankings of NCCU

reveal something about our character, about our belief in not just doing well, but doing good.

I am also thrilled to tell you that our Ph.D. program in integrated biosciences is about to become a reality.

We feel confident about the Board of Governors approval of this proposal next week.

If they do, we will enroll the first cohort of students in fall 2012.

All 32 faculty engaged in the program have earned terminal degrees

from some of the best research universities in the nation.

There are numerous sponsored research grants in the sciences that are limited to institutions with Ph.D. programs.

So without a Ph.D., NCCU is locked out of that competition.

But our Ph.D. in integrated biosciences is on track and on target.
It's consistent with the UNC Tomorrow initiative, our mission and strengths in health disparities research and biotechnology.

I thank Vice Chancellor Reed, Dean Haywood and her team for guiding this process this far.

I am confident it will be successful.

To start the program, Dr. Haywood, I think we might have a couple of Ph.D. candidates for you right here on campus.

Ariel Thomas, is a 2nd-year master's student in biology who won a Cancer Research Award

from the American Association for Cancer Research.

She recently presented her work on prostate cancer at an AACR conference on health disparities in Washington, D.C.

Katherine Haynes, also a master's student, received an award to attend a leukocyte biology meeting

in Kansas City, Missouri, this month.

Dean Haywood, we need to have a conversation with these women.

Let's keep them here.

Clearly, the worst of times can best be seen in the worldwide fiscal tsunami, with national, state

and university consequences.

Personally, these past 12 months have been the most challenging and stressful that I have experienced during my entire career in higher education.

The budget cuts impact access, student success, quality and academic stature.

They are especially worrisome and problematic as we seek to work on these four broad dimensions simultaneously.

To respond to the new economic reality,

we will review low enrollment and degree granting programs for consolidation or elimination.

We will review and reduce redundant services.

And we will improve efficiency and effectiveness.

While the overall state of the university is strong, continuing budget cuts can reverse the gains that we've made

in improving NCCU's effectiveness, responsiveness and competitiveness.

I leave you individually and collectively with these challenges:

Students: Soar like eagles in your academic endeavors.

Stopping out or dropping out is **not** an option.

Make graduation your destination.

Faculty: Teach and mentor our students as though they were all that mattered in the world because they deserve it.

Staff: Serve as though your livelihood depended on it – because it does.

Except for our students, none of us would be here.

Executive leadership: Lead with resolve, passion and effectiveness. Communicate and collaborate.

As Dickens wrote,

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness,

it was the epoch of belief,

it was the epoch of incredulity,

it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair,

we had everything before us, we had nothing before us,”

Yes, these are the best of times and the worst of times at North Carolina Central University, but the **very** best is yet to come.

Eagle Pride?