Philanthropy and the Professoriate

A SYMPOSIUM ON NORTH CAROLINA ENDOWED DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIPS

WESTERN CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

A University of North Carolina campus

What are Endowed Distinguished Professorships?

No one can truly measure the power possessed by a great teacher to instruct and inspire. But one thing is certain – the influence of a great teacher goes far and wide, beyond the life of a single student to have far-reaching impact on society as a whole.

Western Carolina University has a long and well-earned reputation as a haven for superior classroom teaching and strong student-faculty interaction. The university's endowed distinguished professorship program takes that tradition of quality one step further.

An endowed distinguished professorship brings to Cullowhee a nationally renowned expert, with a track record of high-level research, and puts him or her in front of a Western Carolina University class. A WCU student who enrolls in a course taught by a distinguished professor does not need to travel across the country to be taught by the best in the field. That person is already here.

The North Carolina General Assembly established the Distinguished Professors Endowment Trust Fund in 1985 to enable University of North Carolina institutions to receive and match challenge grants to create endowed distinguished professorships. The original legislation provided for matching grants on the basis of one dollar in state money for every two dollars in private funds, but in 2003 the ratio was changed to a dollar-for-dollar match for designated "focused-growth institutions" such as WCU.

In 2005, the legislation was amended again to increase the total amount of challenge grants that can be received to allow contributions of $250,000, $500,000, $750,000 and $1 million to be matched one-for-one, creating the potential for endowed distinguished professorships of up to $2 million at focused growth-institutions.

Adelaide Worth Daniels

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIP IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

An Asheville woman who knows the stigma of being a "different" kind of child provided the private contribution for Western Carolina University to establish its first endowed professorship in January 1996. A gift of $666,000 from businesswoman and philanthropist Dr. Adelaide Daniels Key, combined with $334,000 in matching funds from the state, paved the way for creation of the $1 million Adelaide Worth Daniels Distinguished Professorship in Special Education, giving WCU the resources it needed to add one of the nation's foremost special education authorities to its faculty.

At the official announcement more than a decade ago, Key told members of the WCU community why she made her contribution. "All through my childhood and adolescence I was told to sit still," she said. "When I was a child no one had ever heard of attention deficit disorder. So I was bad, I was stupid, and why in the world couldn't I sit still?

"It is my hope that this professorship will create teachers who will come away from Western Carolina University understanding that different isn't stupid." Key grew up in Raleigh, a member of the prominent Daniels family that owned the Raleigh News and Observer. A former WCU trustee, Key made Macon County her home for most of her adult life and is well-known in Western North Carolina as a community volunteer, humanitarian and philanthropist.

David L. Westling, a leader in special education in the United States for more than 25 years, joined the WCU faculty in August 1997. The professorship that Westling holds is designed to provide expert training and instruction to students in Western's teacher education programs so that they may better serve children with special educational needs, and to serve current teachers of students with special needs.

In 1998, Westling initiated the WCU Teacher Support Program to provide support for public school teachers to help them work more effectively with special needs students, and to prevent attrition of those teachers. After two years of operation, the project was funded for three years by the Office of Special Education Programs in the U.S. Department of Education as a "program of national distinction." That program continues today.

Westling earned master's and doctoral degrees in special education at the University of Florida, and received his bachelor's degree in secondary education at that institution. Before coming to WCU, he served as professor of special education at Florida State University.

Professor David Westling

Carol Grotnes Belk

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIP IN COMMERCIAL AND ELECTRONIC MUSIC

A legendary North Carolina philanthropist with an extensive record of supporting higher education in North Carolina provided a $666,000 gift to Western Carolina University to establish the $1 million Carol Grotnes Belk Professorship.

Dr. Irwin "Ike" Belk's 1996 contribution was made in honor of his wife, Carol Grotnes Belk, whose name also adorns an academic building on WCU's campus.

From his starting salary of $1 a day working at Belk's department store in Charlotte at age 7, Irwin Belk amassed a fortune that he has shared with many colleges and universities in the Carolinas. The gifts have been used to finance scholarships and fellowships, libraries, athletic tracks, classroom buildings, residence halls and dining halls. A favorite project of Belk's is to commission artists to create giant mascots for university campuses, including the Catamount sculpture that now greets visitors from WCU's front-entrance roundabout.

Belk has long been a public servant of North Carolina in other roles, with service on the University of North Carolina Board of Governors, the N.C. House and Senate, and the American Cancer Society's Southeast Division, and he was a U.S. public delegate to the 54th United Nations General Assembly in 1999. He has been the recipient of at least 17 honorary degrees.

Bruce H. Frazier, a two-time Emmy Award-winning composer and music engineer who has extensive credits in the motion picture, television and concert production industries, was named the Carol Grotnes Belk Professor in 1998.

The professorship is designed to benefit students seeking basic backgrounds in commercial and electronic music through study in its composition, arrangement, production and design. With its emphasis on commercial and electronic music, the professorship is tying the traditional music performance programs to trends in the entertainment industry, marketing and public relations.

In addition to overseeing WCU's commercial and electronic music program, Frazier engages in research and creative activities, and works with staff and other faculty members to promote the activities of the program.

Frazier earned bachelor's and master's degrees in music at East Carolina University, and his doctoral degree in choral music at the University of Southern California.

Professor Bruce Frazier

Taft B. Botner

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIP IN ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE GRADES EDUCATION

The legacy of Taft B. and Malvery Botner is rooted in the very heart of Western Carolina University's long and storied tradition of teacher education.

The Botners gave their lives to education. Taft Botner was literally born in a one-room schoolhouse in his native Kentucky. He earned his bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees at the University of Kentucky and worked in that state's public schools as a teacher, principal and assistant superintendent. He served on the faculties of the University of Tennessee and Murray State University before joining the WCU faculty in 1950.

In his 25-year tenure at Western, Botner served in the positions of professor, director of student teaching and teacher placement, head of the department of teaching, and dean of what is now the College of Education and Allied Professions. He received WCU's Distinguished Service Award in 1986. Malvery Botner taught in the public schools for 34 years.

The $500,000 Botner professorship is endowed through $333,000 in gifts from the Botner estate, combined with matching funds from the state. The professorship is intended to attract an expert in education with expertise in an area specifically related to the preparation of teachers of children in kindergarten through ninth grade.

Western North Carolina school teachers gained a noted resource to turn to for assistance in August 2004 when David Strahan joined the faculty as the first Botner Professor.

Strahan was previously professor in the deparment of curriculum and instruction at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. He has more than 90 publications to his credit and has presented extensively at national and regional conferences.

Since his arrival at WCU, Strahan has collaborated with public schools in the region on initiatives to improve reading instruction in secondary schools and mathematics instruction in rural areas. He also has worked with colleagues to revise WCU's middle grades program.

Strahan earned bachelor's and master's degrees in education at Miami University in Ohio, and his doctoral degree in curriculum and instruction at the University of Cincinnati.

Professor David Strahan

Wesley R. Elingburg

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIP IN BUSINESS INNOVATION

An Asheville native who is an alumnus of Western Carolina University provided the financial contributions to enable the university to create an endowed professorship in business innovation.

Wesley R. Elingburg, who graduated summa cum laude (with highest honors) from WCU in 1978 with a bachelor's degree in business administration and accounting, gave gifts totaling $250,000. His contributions have been combined with matching state funds to create the $500,000 professorship.

Elingburg retired in 2005 after 25 years with Burlington-based Laboratory Corporation of America, including the last eight as its chief financial officer. Known also as LabCorp, the Standard & Poor's 500 company employs 25,000 people nationwide.

Elingburg, who also is co-owner of the Greensboro Grasshoppers minor league baseball team, said he made the contribution to WCU out of a desire to give something back to a university that he credits for much of his success in his career and life.

"I will forever be grateful for the foundation of education that Western Carolina provided me," he said. "To give back to the institution is my way of saying thanks. The professorship will benefit many students in the future and will help provide them with a similarly solid foundation."

The professorship will enable the university to recruit a nationally recognized expert in a business discipline who will work closely with WCU's undergraduate and graduate programs in entrepreneurship.

A search is pending for a candidate for fill the position.

Herb and Elaine Gimelstob

Larry and Kris Landry

Gimelstob-Landry

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIP IN REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Financial contributions to support an endowed professorship in regional economic development at Western Carolina University were provided by Florida real estate businessmen Herbert Gimelstob and Laurence D. Landry. Their gifts have been combined with state matching funds to create the $500,000 professorship.

A search is pending for an individual who will address core issues in education and regional economic policy development. In addition to teaching and conducting research in the College of Business, the individual who fills the position will hold a joint appointment with WCU's Institute for the Economy and the Future to conduct targeted policy studies and analyses, and promote development and refinement of effective economic development policy for the region and state.

Gimelstob and Landry own a parcel of land near WCU's campus on which they plan to construct a student housing facility. Through an agreement with university officials, the developers were allowed to tap onto WCU's utilities infrastructure in return for providing funding to create a new endowed professorship.

"This agreement turned out to be a definite win-win situation for everyone involved," said Chuck Wooten, WCU vice chancellor for administration and finance. "WCU students will have another housing option, the university will be able to establish an important professorship, and Mr. Gimelstob and Mr. Landry will be rewarded for their investment."

Herbert Gimelstob is a resident of Delray Beach, Fla., while Laurence D. Landry lives in Hobe Sound, Fla.

Ambassador Jeanette W. Hyde

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIP IN GERONTOLOGICAL SOCIAL WORK

Dr. Wallace Hyde, an alumnus, longtime benefactor and former trustee of Western Carolina University, provided a gift to the university in 2005 establishing an endowed professorship in honor of his wife, current WCU trustee Jeanette Hyde.

Hyde's $250,000 contribution was combined with matching state funds to establish the professorship in social work. The professorship is designed to provide leadership for WCU's academic, service and applied research programs in gerontology – in particular, WCU's Gerontology Initiative, which supplies a range of programs and services that enhance the social, cultural, physical and economic well-being of older adults.

Wallace Hyde earned bachelor's and master's degrees at WCU and received an honorary doctorate in education from the university in 2002. A widely recognized business and political figure across North Carolina, he also has twice served as a member of the University of North Carolina Board of Governors.

Well-known for her passions for public service and politics, Jeanette Hyde is a former teacher and social worker who has served in capacities with many organizations, including the State Arboretum, the N.C. Child Advocacy Institute, the North Carolina Community Foundation Board, and many higher education institutions in addition to WCU. In 1994, she accepted a position as President Bill Clinton's ambassador to the Barbados and six other Caribbean nations. In that post, she arranged the first visit to that area by a U.S. president and secretary of state.

Jeanette Hyde joined WCU's board of trustees in 1999, and she is now beginning her eighth year of service on the board. A national search is under way for a candidate to fill the professorship.

Joe and Cynthia Kimmel

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIPS IN CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT

Western Carolina University's efforts to build one of the top construction management programs in the nation received a major boost in December 2005 when Kimmel & Associates, a construction industry executive search company based in Asheville, announced a pledge of $6.92 million to the university.

In addition to providing a $2 million endowment for program operations and a $1 million endowment for scholarship support, the pledge from Joe and Cynthia Kimmel will provide $3 million for endowed professorships in construction management. Combined with matching state funds, Kimmel's contributions will result in the establishment of one $2 million professorship and four $1 million professorships.

In recognition of the contributions, WCU announced the naming of The Kimmel School of Construction Management, Engineering and Technology.

Joe Kimmel is no stranger to philanthropy, as he and his company have made contributions to many organizations in Western North Carolina, including the University of North Carolina at Asheville, Asheville Art Museum, Humane Society, Center for Diversity Education, Asheville Buncombe Community Christian Ministries and others.

Kimmel founded his company in 1981. Kimmel and Associates is a search firm specializing in the construction, solid waste, freight forwarding and supply chain industries. The company is one of the largest recruiting firms in the country specializing in construction.

MOUNTAINTOP

GOLF & LAKE CLUB

Mountaintop

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIP IN ADVANCED OPTICS MANUFACTURING

Developers of a lakeside golf club in southern Jackson County provided the funding to allow Western Carolina University to establish an endowed professorship in advanced optics manufacturing.

Mountaintop Golf and Lake Club contributed $500,000 to WCU, enabling the university to acquire a $500,000 state match to create the new $1 million professorship. The company contributed additional resources to complete an environmental restoration project on a 1-mile portion of Cullowhee Creek that runs through campus.

The contributions of Mountaintop were the result of an agreement between the company and state environmental officials. As part of a permit that allowed the company to disturb a stream bank within its development, the state gave permission for Mountaintop to mitigate the environmental impact of its project near Cashiers by restoring the stream located in Cullowhee.

A search is pending for a candidate to fill the professorship, who is expected to be a world-class applied research engineer who can help build innovative product capacity that is relevant to emerging economic sectors of the Western North Carolina region. The professor also is expected to integrate his or her teaching responsibility with the development of bio-adaptive rehabilitative medical devices leading to improved quality of life for people with disabilities.

John A. Parris Jr. and Dorothy Luxton Parris

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIP IN APPALACHIAN CULTURE

During his lifetime of writing, Dr. John A. Parris Jr. himself became an Appalachian cultural institution. Thus, it naturally follows that part of the great legacy of John Parris and his wife, Dorothy, is an endowed professorship focusing on the culture of the region they loved so much.

John Parris was recognized most readily in his later years for his "Roaming the Mountains" columns in the Asheville Citizen-Times and for his books that celebrated the traditional folk ways of Western North Carolina. But, Parris also led an illustrious earlier life as an internationally read correspondent in New York City and in wartime London.

Parris had a long affiliation with Western Carolina University, covering the university's athletics program as a young newspaper correspondent. He helped establish WCU's journalism studies program and assisted in developing the university's first board of visitors. He championed the establishment of a center to preserve the traditions and cultures of the WNC mountains, which led to the founding of the Mountain Heritage Center at the university. Each year, WCU presents the Mountain Heritage Award to an individual who has made great contributions to the preservation or interpretation of Southern Appalachian culture. Appropriately enough, John Parris won the first Mountain Heritage Award in 1976.

Dorothy Parris was a skilled artist, with achievements in art, writing and creative consultancies in New York and other cities. Through the years, she was heavily involved in civic and community service in WNC, especially focusing on the cultural advantages and life-changing influences of art and music on public school children.

The $500,000 professorship was established in the summer of 2002 through $233,000 from the estate of John and Dorothy Parris, augmented with a $100,000 grant from the C.D. Spangler Foundation and matching state funds totalling $167,000. Spangler, a former banking executive and education leader, served as president of the UNC system from 1986 through 1997. The professorship in the interdisciplinary area of Appalachian studies was designed so that it could be anchored in the departments of anthropology, art, communication and theatre arts, English or history.

Ron Rash joined Western's faculty as the first Parris Professor in the fall of 2003. Rash has received numerous awards for his poetry and fiction, including the O. Henry Award and the Southern Book Critics Circle Award for Best Book of Fiction.

In addition to his teaching duties at WCU, Rash has worked with the staff of the Mountain Heritage Center on a series of readings, performances and lectures that highlight Appalachian culture.

Rash earned a bachelor's degree in English at Gardner-Webb University and his master's degree in English at Clemson University.

Professor Ron Rash

Carolyn Plemmons Phillips and Ben R. Phillips

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIP IN MUSICAL THEATRE

The $500,000 Phillips Professorship in Musical Theatre at Western Carolina University was made possible by a $233,000 gift from the estate of the late Carolyn P. Phillips of Waynesville, $100,000 in matching money from the C.D. Spangler Foundation and $167,000 in matching state funds.

Established in 2000 as the first such commitment to musical theatre in the University of North Carolina system, the Phillips Professorship focuses on an interdisciplinary area of study anchored in the departments of communication and theatre arts, and music. The program is designed to provide students with practical work-related experiences, build skills needed in both music and theatre, and provide an interdisciplinary foundation.

Ben Phillips founded the Waynesville Gas Service in 1951, and Carolyn Phillips took over operations of the business in 1967, following the death of her husband. Active in town beautification efforts in Waynesville and an active participant in cultural activities at WCU, Carolyn Phillips was a member of the Waynesville Business and Professional Women's Club and a recipient of the "Woman of the Year" award. She died in 1996.

C.D. Spangler Jr., a former banking executive and education leader, served as president of the UNC system from 1986 through 1997.

A national search is under way for a candidate to fill the position.

WNC HEALTH NETWORK
Providers Working Together

WNC Healthcare Organizations

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIP IN PHYSICAL THERAPY

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIP IN NURSE ANESTHESIA

The creation of distinguished professorships in physical therapy and in nurse anesthesia at Western Carolina University are the result of partnerships involving the university and regional health care providers aimed at addressing critical personnel shortages in those two fields.

WCU's master's degree program in physical therapy started in 1996 and the first class graduated in 1998. Although the program receives funding from the state, funds contributed by the region's health care providers enabled WCU to develop the program much more quickly and to operate it at a much more competitive level. Supplemental funding was critical for faculty and student recruitment while the program became established.

Network hospitals and other contributors provided $327,814 in start-up assistance for the program, and interest earned added to that total. From that fund, $250,000 was combined with matching state funds to create the $500,000 WNC Healthcare Organizations Distinguished Professorship in Physical Therapy.

A search is pending for a candidate to fill the professorship. That position will be filled by a nationally recognized scholar with a specialty in human movement or gerontology, and that individual will lead the program as it makes an expected transition to the doctoral level over the next several years.

"We are grateful to the network hospitals for the funding they provided to establish the master's in physical therapy program and we trust the quality of the graduates and improved availability of physical therapists in the region have validated this investment," said Noelle Kehrberg, then dean of WCU's College of Applied Sciences.

Local health care providers that contributed to WCU's physical therapy program are Caldwell Memorial Hospital, Catawba Memorial Hospital, Frye Regional Medical Center, Grace Hospital, Harris Regional Hospital, Haywood Regional Medical Center, Highlands-Cashiers Hospital, Margaret Pardee Hospital, Mission Medical Center, Murphy Medical Center, Park Ridge Hospital, Sloop Memorial Hospital, St. Joseph's Hospital, St. Luke's Hospital, Thom's Rehabilitation Hospital, Transylvania Community Hospital and Valdese General Hospital.

In the summer of 2005, Regional health care providers stepped forward again with important contributions that will help WCU create a master's degree program in nurse anesthesia by providing funding for an endowed professorship. Hospitals and clinics in Western North Carolina are struggling to deal with the increased demand for surgical services, particularly given the increasing number of aging adults in the region.

WCU's nurse anesthesia program is expected to begin in January 2007, pending approval by the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs. A national search is under way for a candidate to fill the professorship. That individual is expected to bring national-level expertise to ensure successful development and operation of the program.

The contributions of regional health care providers were combined with a state match to create the $500,000 professorship. Contributing institutions included Park Ridge Hospital, Blue Ridge HealthCare, Table Rock Anesthesiology Services, Mission Hospitals, WestCare Health System, Haywood Regional Medical Center, Murphy Medical Center, Asheville Anesthesiology Associates, Angel Medical Center, Spruce Pine Community Hospital, Transylvania Community Hospital, McDowell Hospital and Catawba Valley Medical Center.

Jay M. Robinson

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIP IN EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES

A president of the University of North Carolina system who was entering retirement honored Jay Robinson, a legend of North Carolina public education, in 1997 by establishing an endowed professorship in his honor at Western Carolina University.

Endowed at more than $500,000 with a combination of financial contributions and matching state funds, the Jay M. Robinson Professorship enables WCU to bring to the campus experts from the corporate or educational sectors who are using electronic technologies to enhance the teaching and learning process.

In making his $355,000 donation to Western in honor of his friend and colleague, C.D. Spangler Jr. praised Robinson as a tireless public servant, from his days as a high school teacher and coach through his tenure as superintendent of the nation's 30th-largest school system, and to his position as chairman of the State Board of Education. Robinson led the state board from 1994 to 1997.

Although Robinson's parents had only a fifth-grade education, they were determined that their children would go to college. Jay Robinson's education began in a two-room schoolhouse in the remote Mitchell County community of Bandana. He went on to earn degrees from three colleges. His brother, the late H.F. "Cotton" Robinson, also became a leader in public education, serving as chancellor at WCU from 1974 until 1984, guiding the institution through a decade of growth.

During a ceremony at WCU, Robinson, said he had received many honors, "but this one is very special. It will endure."

"Western means so much to me because you were one of the first universities that really started reaching out and really helping the public schools in this area," said Robinson, who died in 2000.

John LeBaron joined WCU's faculty in 2004 as the Robinson Professor. He previously helped lead information technology and academic technology initiatives for the five-campus University of Massachusetts system, and served as adviser to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Education, where he co-authored the state's core educational technology policy paper on public school reform. LeBaron earned his doctoral and master's degrees in educational media and technology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, and received a bachelor's degree in political science at McGill University.

Working out of the department of educational leadership and foundations at WCU, LeBaron has been focused on helping develop a clear institutional vision for the university's continuing movement toward technology-based and computer-networked scholarship. He also has supported faculty conversations about challenges and achievements in technology-infused teaching, learning and instructional design.

Professor John LeBaron

Sequoyah

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIP IN CHEROKEE STUDIES

Western Carolina University's Sequoyah Professorship is named in honor of a revered figure of Cherokee history and culture who devised the Cherokee syllabary, the first written Native American alphabet.

When the Friends of Sequoyah, a multi-state organization committed to the preservation of Cherokee heritage, presented a gift of $130,000 to WCU in 1993, it marked the beginning of a quest to establish the $1 million Sequoyah Professorship in Cherokee Studies. Fund raising for the professorship was completed in January 1999 when a one-third state match was secured to take the endowment fund over the $1 million mark.

In addition to the Friends of Sequoyah contribution, funding was provided through gifts of $100,000 from Cherokee businessman Jimmy Cooper, $100,000 from the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, $100,000 from Harrah's Entertainment Inc., plus a $250,000 National Endowment for the Humanities challenge grant.

During a ceremony marking the gifts from Harrah's Entertainment and the Eastern Band, then-Cherokee Principal Chief Joyce Dugan called the establishment of the Cherokee Studies program at WCU "one of the most important steps in education for the Cherokee people this century."

In addition to helping WCU build a true academic program in Cherokee Studies, the Sequoyah Professorship is designed to bolster the scholarly relationship between the university and the Eastern Band and create opportunities for collaborative research.

Tom Hatley, a scholar of Revolutionary War-era Native American history, joined WCU's faculty as the Sequoyah Professor in 2002. Hatley has worked to strengthen the relationship between the Cherokee community and the university while building Cherokee and Native American programs at the university. Funding from the Cherokee Initiative has been used to support new fellowships in Cherokee Studies, an Elder-in-Residence program, interpretation of the campus cultural history, and teaching by Cherokee scholars. WCU's Cherokee Studies Program also is participating in Cherokee language revitalization efforts.

Hatley earned his doctoral degree in colonial/environmental history at Duke University, a master's degree in forest science at Yale University, a master's degree in history at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and a bachelor's degree at Davidson College.

Professor Tom Hatley

Catherine Brewer Smith

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIP IN COMMUNICATION DISORDERS

A $300,000 gift from the estate of Catherine Brewer Smith, a Franklin resident who died in 2001 and whose father attended Western Carolina University, enabled WCU to create a $500,000 endowed professorship in communication disorders.

The university designated $250,000 of Brewer's gift to be combined with matching state funds to establish the professorship, while the remaining $50,000 of her gift was used to create an endowed scholarship fund for students majoring in communication disorders.

Smith's desire to play a role in the advancement of knowledge and services in communication disorders stemmed from personal experiences in which service professionals in the field assisted members of her family, especially in the area of hearing disorders.

Smith's estate gift to WCU was the latest in a series of family contributions made to honor the memory of her father, Albert Dudley Brewer. A former Western student who lived in Franklin during the later years of his life, Brewer had a hearing impairment. The Albert D. Brewer Scholarship Fund was established in 1984 by Smith's brother, Dudley E. Brewer. A sister, Adelaide Louise Brewer, made additional contributions to the fund in 1988, ensuring its endowment in perpetuity.

A native of Marion, Ind., Catherine Brewer Smith owned and managed a motel in Medeira Beach, Fla., for 26 years. She maintained residences in Franklin and Yankeetown, Fla.

The professorship is designed to help serve the speech-language pathology needs of the Western North Carolina region, where above-average poverty levels and lengthy drives to service providers combine to hamper treatment for adults and children.

A search is pending for a candidate to fill the position.

Blanton J. Whitmire

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIP IN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE

A lifelong dedication to environmental stewardship and a desire to see development in Western North Carolina proceed without negatively impacting the region's environment led Drs. Blanton J. and Margaret S. Whitmire to present a $666,000 gift to Western Carolina University, creating a $1 million distinguished professorship in environmental science.

Their gift in 1997 was combined with matching state funds to create the professorship, continuing the Whitmire family's longstanding tradition of supporting education – in particular, education at Western Carolina University. The professorship is designed to be filled by a scholar who can provide expertise in the most critical areas of environmental science in the mountain region.

"It will be up to the university to help the people of Western North Carolina…by educating our citizens about the benefits that the entire region can reap from cleaner water, cleaner air and cleaner land," Blanton J. Whitmire said during a ceremony marking the family's gift.

Past president and chief executive officer of Whitmire Research Laboratories Inc. in St. Louis, Blanton J. Whitmire conceived in the early 1960s an innovative concept for the application of indoor insecticide, which is still widely regarded in the pest control industry as the most environmentally sound and effective method of applying insecticides indoors.

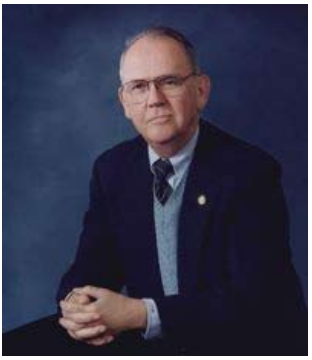
Whitmire began his career in the pest control industry in 1937, joining his brother Homer in business in St. Louis that year. His company became an employee stock ownership plan company in 1987, and he retired that year. Whitmire and his wife continue to live in St. Louis.

Jerry Miller, a geologist and teacher who has researched water quality issues around the world, joined WCU's faculty as the first Whitmire Professor in 1999. Research led by Miller has concentrated on suspended sediments, the factor that poses the most significant water quality problem in WNC.

Miller's work also focuses on the environmental impacts of metal mining; the transport of heavy metals and other contaminants in rivers and lakes; and restoration of river and riparian ecosystems.

Miller earned his bachelor's and doctoral degrees in geology at Southern Illinois University, and his master's degree in geology at the University of New Mexico.

Professor Jerry Miller



Cass Ballenger

DISTINGUISHED PROFESSORSHIP IN ENGINEERING

A $500,000 professorship in engineering at Western Carolina University is being developed through a $250,000 gift from Cass Ballenger, who served North Carolina's 10th Congressional district in the U.S. House of Representatives from 1986 to 2005.

Ballenger's gift will be combined with matching state funds to establish the professorship, which is expected to add a nationally renowned expert in engineering to WCU's faculty.

Ballenger founded Plastic Packaging Inc. in Hickory in 1956. Before being elected to Congress, he served on the Catawba County Commission, where he was chairman and voted N.C. Commissioner of the Year by the N.C. Association of County Commissioners. He also served in the N.C. House of Representatives from 1974 until 1976, and the state Senate from 1976 through 1986. As a state senator, he was recognized as his party's most effective legislator by the Institute of Government.

In the Congress, Ballenger was a member of the Committee on Education and the Workforce, and the Committee on International Relations, where he was chairman of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee.

Ballenger established a foundation in 1990 to raise funds for schools and hospitals in Central and South America. He has been active in that region for more than 35 years and has been the recipient of humanitarian awards from various organizations for his long record of community service.

For more information

about endowed distinguished professorships at Western Carolina University, please contact one of the following:

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