

David O. Belcher assumed the role of chancellor of Western Carolina University on July 1, 2011. As chancellor, he oversees a University of North Carolina system institution enrolling more than 10,800 students and employing more than 1,400 faculty and staff. The most important priority of his initial year as chancellor was the completion of a new strategic plan titled “2020 Vision: Focusing Our Future,” which provided a clear focus for the institution at a moment of fiscal challenge, envisioned strategic enrollment growth complemented by increasing admissions standards, and reinforced the institution’s historic commitment to Western North Carolina.

Under Dr. Belcher’s leadership, the university has realized many of the initiatives of the strategic plan. Among them, WCU has seen steady increases in enrollment, with the size of the student body increasing by 15.5 percent since fall 2011. The university’s freshman-to-sophomore retention rate has risen to 80 percent, doing so five years ahead of the plan’s target date. The university has undergone a process of academic program prioritization to align those programs to WCU’s mission and strategic directions, and reorganized several administrative units as part of an effort to improve the effectiveness and efficiencies of campus business processes. The university has consolidated graduate and undergraduate academic programs previously offered at locations across Buncombe County to a new off-campus instructional site in Biltmore Park Town Square in Asheville, and has continued to expand academic offerings there. As part of the plan’s goal to increase student access and student success at WCU, the university has added more than 190 new endowed scholarships since March 2012.

In addition, Dr. Belcher initiated a revision of the university’s campus master plan to guide the development and improvements of the campus over the next several decades. Among the changes to the university’s physical plant under his leadership are Noble Hall, a new mixed-use facility consisting of a blend of retail, dining and student housing; renovations to Brown Cafeteria to create additional dining options for a growing campus; and plans for a medical office building near the Health and Human Sciences Building as part of WCU’s Millennial Initiative, a regional economic development strategy designed to enable the university to engage in public-private partnerships that enhance educational opportunities for students and increase the ability of faculty to conduct research.

Dr. Belcher has provided leadership and advocacy for two significant statewide initiatives with tremendous impact on Western Carolina University and the region it serves. In March 2016, North Carolina voters approved a statewide bond package that includes \$110 million for replacement of WCU’s 1970s-era Natural Sciences Building; the new facility is expected to open in 2021. And, in May 2016, Western Carolina University was selected for inclusion in the NC Promise Tuition Plan, a state higher education investment commitment that will dramatically lower tuition payments for students who choose to attend WCU and two other University of North Carolina system institutions beginning in fall 2018.

Prior to his arrival at WCU, Dr. Belcher served as provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, a position he assumed in July 2003. In this role, he served as the second officer in charge of the university and oversaw the academic mission of the institution. He twice led UALR in strategic planning initiatives. His priorities as provost included strengthening UALR’s research mission, curricular development at the master and doctoral levels, faculty development and student success. Dr. Belcher began his career on the faculty of Missouri State University, where he served for 15 years, the last nine as dean of that institution’s College of Arts and Letters. In that capacity, he served as the founding director of the Missouri Fine Arts Academy, a three-week, intensive program of study for some of Missouri’s most talented high school arts students.

An accomplished pianist, Dr. Belcher has appeared throughout the United States as a recitalist and chamber musician. He holds degrees from Furman University, the University of Michigan and the Eastman School of Music at the University of Rochester. In 1981, Dr. Belcher was awarded a Rotary Foundation Graduate Fellowship to study in Vienna, Austria. While a student at Eastman, he held a one-year appointment on the school’s piano faculty and was named recipient of

the Jerald C. Graue Memorial Scholarship for excellence in musicological research. Dr. Belcher holds the doctor of musical arts degree from the Eastman School.

Active in civic life, Dr. Belcher serves on the boards of directors of the North Carolina Arboretum and the Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce, and previously served on the board of trustees of DLP Harris Regional Hospital and DLP Swain County Hospital. A member of the NCAA Division I board of directors, he has served as chair of the Little Rock Arts and Culture Commission, as president of the boards of directors of the Springfield (Missouri) Regional Opera and the Springfield Regional Arts Council, and as a member of the board of directors of the National Conference of Governors' Schools. He was a member of the 1997 class of Leadership Missouri and the 1999 recipient of the Ozzie Award, which recognizes significant contributions to the arts in Springfield, Missouri.

A native of Barnwell, South Carolina, he is married to Susan Brummell Belcher, a professional vocalist.