



# TIME WELL SPENT

BY SYLVIA ADCOCK '81  
ILLUSTRATIONS BY GWEN KERAVAL

*From campus improvements to a historic campaign, Chancellor Randy Woodson's tenure has been marked by success at every level.*

When Randy Woodson arrived at NC State in April 2010 to take over as chancellor, the university's endowment was just a little over \$500 million. A plan to move the College of Engineering to Centennial Campus had stalled. The student center in the middle of campus was shopworn and dreary. And the iconic symbol of the university, the Memorial Belltower, was badly in need of a facelift as it chimed out the hours from a set of speakers in the belfry.

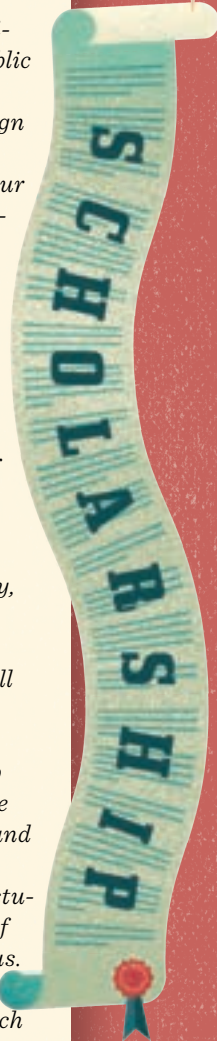
Today, the endowment — a fund of investments whose returns are used for operating money — is over \$2 billion, a sign of a healthy future. Instead of solely relying on state money for facilities, the university now raises money from donors to help pay for new buildings. Engineering has moved into its new home in Fitts-Woolard Hall next to the new Hunt Library. The faces of Centennial Campus and Main Campus have changed, and the Talley Student Center is now a bustling hub of activity. By nearly every metric, NC State's



**FALL ADDRESS**  
Oct. 28, 2016

"Tonight, we will officially launch the public phase of the largest fundraising campaign in NC State history, one that will shape our university for generations to come. This campaign will offer our 34,000-plus students more high-impact educational opportunities. It will significantly increase the number of scholarships and fellowships for students. It will drive growth in our faculty, providing support through endowed professorships. It will update and improve our classrooms and facilities. It will help ensure that NC State remains accessible and affordable so we can enroll the brightest students — regardless of their economic status. And the campaign will provide us a much more robust endowment to better support NC State for generations."

**RANDY WOODSON**



profile has ascended. Rankings have improved. Enrollment has grown. The university is more selective. And students are succeeding more than ever before.

And the Belltower? A 2021 renovation included the tower's first-ever set of bronze bells to keep time.

Woodson came to NC State after a 25-year stint at Purdue where he had worked his way up from professor to dean to provost. NC State was his first chancellor's job, and it was to be his last. Woodson's tenure of nearly 15 years is highly unusual among public university leaders at a time when shifting political forces can end careers and well-regarded leaders are wooed to other jobs. Among all colleges and universities in the nation, the average tenure is less than six years.

Woodson announced this summer that he would be retiring when his contract expires in June 2025. The search for the next chancellor is underway.

**Looking Back**

In a wide-ranging interview, Woodson and his wife, Susan, sat down with *NC State* magazine at the Gregg Museum of Art & Design, the site of their first home in Raleigh. The cover of the spring 2010 issue of *NC State* depicts the couple just after he accepted the job. What would he tell the slightly more fresh-faced Randy Woodson, who was just beginning this journey?

Woodson pauses. And then, "Enjoy the ride," he says. It's

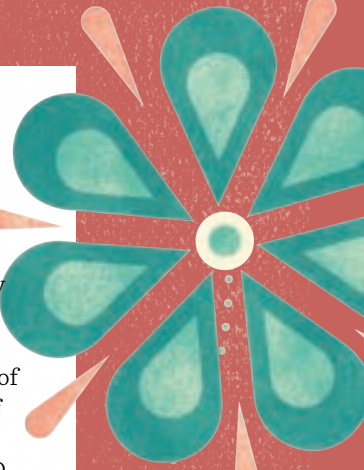
important, he says, to not have all the answers in the beginning. "But there's one thing a new chancellor has to know," he says. "You've got to learn the history, the culture of the place very quickly. Everybody will expect you to know it — and to embody it."

The past 15 years have been full of successes but also challenges, chief among them keeping the university safe and running during the COVID pandemic. "I didn't have a playbook for that," he says. Another challenge has been operating in an environment where state money is not always available. "While we've been very well supported by the legislature — particularly with recent investments in facilities — we haven't had consistent funding for salaries to be able to give to our employees," Woodson says. "There's been a push for affordability and efficiency ... and we've been focusing on that. We're managing growth, budgets, efficiency and expectations when there's not a big safe in the chancellor's office. That's why fundraising is so important."

To that end, Woodson counts celebrating the end of the successful Think and Do the Extraordinary Campaign, which raised more than \$2 billion for the university, among the top moments in his tenure. "I believe we have more of a culture of philanthropy now," he says. "People understand the difference they make through their donations to the university. A lot of people get credit for that."

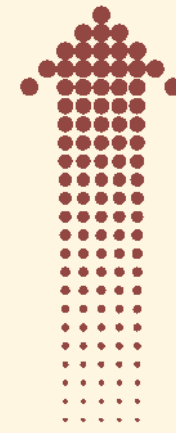
Woodson listed three other accomplishments that he rates among his top pride points:

» The NC State Employees Dependent Tuition Scholarship. The Woodsons established the fund in 2015 with a gift



**On the Move**

From rankings to research, the numbers tell the story.



**Moving Up**

NC State has been steadily climbing in *U.S. News & World Report's* rankings of top universities since Chancellor Randy Woodson took office.

**Top National Universities**

**2024:**  
**#60**  
↑  
2010: #111

**Best public schools**

**2024:**  
**#28**  
↑  
2010: #52

**In the Lab and in the Marketplace**

**\$546 MILLION** in annual research expenditures, over 40% more than the level in 2010

**\$476 MILLION** new sponsored research awards in 2023, the highest in university history



More than  
**190**  
start-ups and spinoffs based on NC State research

More than  
**70**  
private partners on Centennial Campus



- #2 Best public college in North Carolina for value (*Money*)
- #2 Research commercialization among public universities nationally (*Heartland Forward*)
- #2 Military friendly school among Tier I research institutions (*Military Friendly*)
- #3 Graduate nuclear engineering program nationally (*U.S. News & World Report*)
- #5 Best value among public universities nationally (*U.S. News & World Report*)

**Making the Grade**

NC State has become more selective. In 2010,

**54%** of all students who applied were admitted.

In 2023, only **40%** got in. Nearly half were in the top 10 percent of their high school class.

The six-year graduation rate, which tracks the percentage of students who graduate within six years or less, has gone from 73% to **86%**

# FINAL FOUR

## A Valid Passport

Woodson has visited 14 countries in an official capacity, meeting with alumni, corporate and university leaders, and students who were studying abroad.

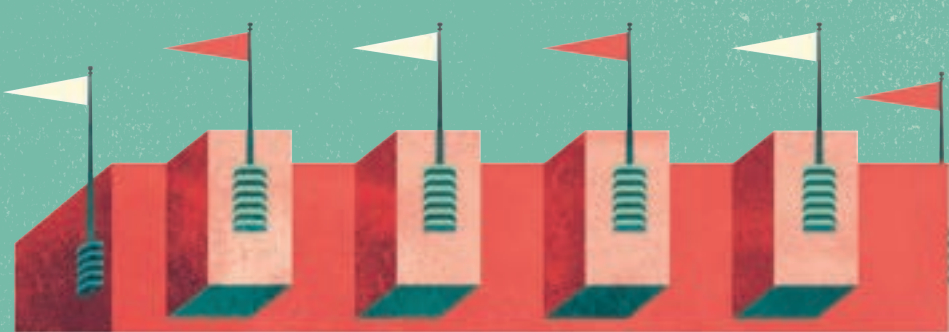
**Africa:**  
Uganda and Kenya

**Asia:**  
Japan, China, South Korea and India

**Europe:**  
England, Ireland, Germany, Denmark, Czech Republic

**South America:**  
Colombia, Chile

**North America:**  
Canada



of \$1.5 million. “We had been at other schools that had something like that, and we couldn’t believe it didn’t exist here,” Susan Woodson says. Dependents of faculty and staff members can receive \$2,000 per year in tuition aid. » Increasing interdisciplinary work. “That’s embodied best by the work of our faculty clusters,” Woodson says. The Chancellor’s Faculty Excellence Program creates interdisciplinary clusters of faculty across colleges to address the world’s pressing challenges. » The physical transformation of campus. Woodson says he didn’t come in planning to build so many new buildings — a total of five, including the new Integrative Sciences Building under construction. “I just knew infrastructure was critical,” he says. Susan Woodson remembers an early drive through campus. “I said, ‘What’s that ugly building?’ It was Talley,” she says. Of course, a top moment in the chancellor’s tenure came very recently. “Two Final Fours in one year!” he says.

“That was something that brought alumni together, brought us a lot of attention from all over the country. It was a whole lot of fun.”

But consistently, year after year, the day that Woodson says he most looks forward to is the day that celebrates the reason the university exists — the education of students. “Commencement is always a great moment for me,” he says. “You look out over this sea of red. PNC will be absolutely full. And everybody is happy.”

## Home Sweet Home

The Woodsons settled into life in Raleigh quickly, moving into the chancellor’s residence on Hillsborough Street. “I really felt at home when I first got here,” Susan Woodson says. “These are our people.” A former graphic designer and an accomplished artist, she got involved in the art scene in Raleigh and *(continued on p. 29.)*



## Chord Changes

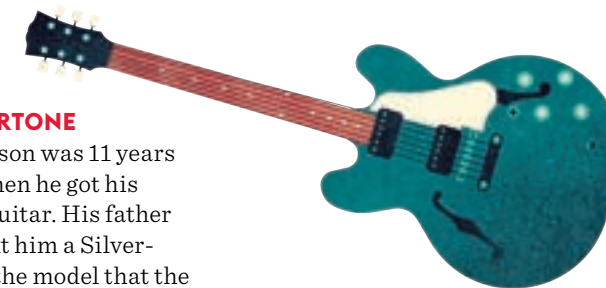
Chancellor Randy Woodson’s career through four guitars.

*We all know that Chancellor Randy Woodson loves the guitar. We’ve seen him play on the back porch at the Point and onstage at Packapalooza. And he has nine in his personal collection. So, we thought it was apropos to give a nod to his life and career through the old six-string.* **CHRIS SAUNDERS**



### SILVERTONE

Woodson was 11 years old when he got his first guitar. His father bought him a Silver-tone, the model that the Sears, Roebuck and Co. sold, from a pawn shop in Biloxi, Miss.



### MARTIN D-28

The chancellor has been vocal in his time at NC State about how much he loves bluegrass. The Martin D-28 has become synonymous with the bluegrass sound, with legends like Tony Rice playing that model. Woodson admitted to *NC State* magazine when he first arrived in 2010 that he did enjoy a little updated edge to his bluegrass, saying, “[Y]ou haven’t heard ‘Honky Tonk Women’ until you hear it on a banjo.” Woodson counts two Martins as part of his collection — an HD-35 and D-18.

### GIBSON L-5

This was the choice instrument of one of the most important jazz guitarists of the 20th century, Wes Montgomery, who was from Indiana. Woodson, of course, spent most of his formative academic career in the Hoosier State, working his way up the academic ranks at Purdue University from plant biologist to dean of agriculture and finally to provost and executive vice president of academic affairs. Woodson owns a Gibson, but it’s an ES-335.



### 1975 FENDER TELE CUSTOM

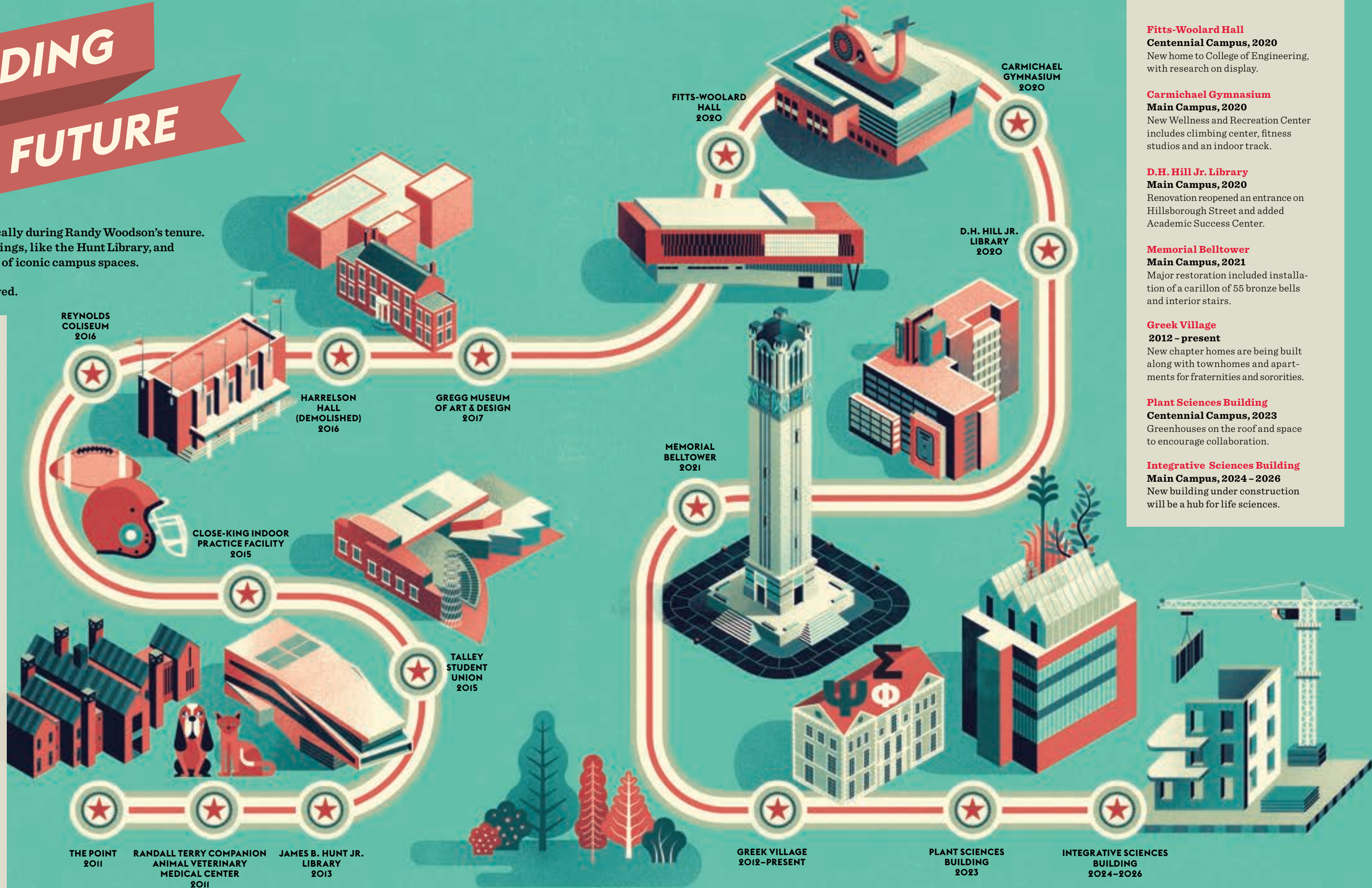
We all know how proud Randy Woodson is of his Arkansas roots. He’s always citing lessons his father told him growing up in his home state. And he got his undergraduate degree in horticulture in 1979. This model is the guitar that Keith Richards started playing on the Rolling Stones’ Tour of the Americas in 1975. It was on this tour that saw Richards and his bandmate Ronnie Wood arrested in Woodson’s hometown of Fordyce, Ark. It’s one of Woodson’s favorite stories from his home state.



# BUILDING A FUTURE

NC State's campus changed dramatically during Randy Woodson's tenure. Some projects were brand-new buildings, like the Hunt Library, and others were much-needed renovations of iconic campus spaces.

Here's a look at the new and the renewed.



**The Point**  
Centennial Campus, 2011  
New Chancellor's residence provides more space to meet and greet visitors.

**Randall Terry Companion Animal Veterinary Medical Center**  
Centennial Biomedical Campus, 2011  
One of the nation's largest veterinary medicine hospitals.

**James B. Hunt Jr. Library**  
Centennial Campus, 2013  
Home of the bookBot, an automated system that can store up to 2 million books.

**Talley Student Union**  
Main Campus, 2015  
Transformed Main Campus with vibrant spaces and dining options.

**Close-King Indoor Practice Facility**  
Carter-Finley Stadium, 2015  
Added an indoor 120-yard football field for practice and training.

**Reynolds Coliseum**  
Main Campus, 2016  
Renovation provided better lockers and competition spaces, plus the NC State Athletics Walk of Fame and History.

**Harrelson Hall**  
Main Campus, Demolished 2016  
To be replaced by a new science building.

**Gregg Museum of Art & Design**  
Main Campus, 2017  
Former chancellor's residence is now an exhibition space for the Gregg collection.

**Fitts-Woolard Hall**  
Centennial Campus, 2020  
New home to College of Engineering, with research on display.

**Carmichael Gymnasium**  
Main Campus, 2020  
New Wellness and Recreation Center includes climbing center, fitness studios and an indoor track.

**D.H. Hill Jr. Library**  
Main Campus, 2020  
Renovation reopened an entrance on Hillsborough Street and added Academic Success Center.

**Memorial Belltower**  
Main Campus, 2021  
Major restoration included installation of a carillon of 55 bronze bells and interior stairs.

**Greek Village**  
2012 - present  
New chapter homes are being built along with townhomes and apartments for fraternities and sororities.

**Plant Sciences Building**  
Centennial Campus, 2023  
Greenhouses on the roof and space to encourage collaboration.

**Integrative Sciences Building**  
Main Campus, 2024 - 2026  
New building under construction will be a hub for life sciences.

# Brick by Brick

Campaign brings resources for a bright future.

## FALL ADDRESS Oct. 21, 2022

*"On December 31 of last year, we concluded our Think and Do the Extraordinary Campaign. By now, you must have heard the big number: \$2.1 billion raised. Today, I want to give some more context for that number. First, only 12 other public universities in the United States have ever raised more than \$2 billion. Second, of the 128,000 alumni and donors who gave to NC State from all around the globe, one quarter of them did so for the very first time. And third, we are now able to financially support 5,000 more students than we could before."*

**RANDY WOODSON**

### With a Little Help from our Friends

NC State raised **\$2.1 billion** through the Think and Do the Extraordinary Campaign, the largest in the university's history, which concluded in 2021. As a result:

More than  
**1,300**  
new scholarships  
and fellowships.



**104**  
new endowed  
distinguished  
professorships.

› **The Wilson College of Textiles** joined the Poole College of Management as NC State's second named college.

**three**  
named,  
endowed college  
dean's chairs, a first  
for NC State.

› **The Goodnight Scholars Program** was expanded to include 50 transfer students from North Carolina community colleges.

More than  
**\$1.2 MILLION**  
raised for the  
**Student Emergency Fund**  
to help students  
pay for housing,  
food, utilities,  
medicine, childcare  
and other critical needs.

› **The Extraordinary Opportunity Scholarship Initiative** has provided need-based scholarships for 434 students and counting.

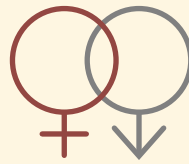
### A Popular Place

More students are coming to NC State:

Total enrollment went from less than  
**33,000** to  
**37,323** in 2023.

Freshman undergraduate applications have more than doubled, from  
**19,503** to nearly  
**40,000**.

More women are coming to NC State. In 2010, 56 percent of undergraduates were male and 44 percent female. Today the undergraduate student body is  
**50-50**  
male-female.



### Fund for the Future

The university's endowment has grown from **\$500 million** in 2010 to more than **\$2 billion**.

The income from that fund that helps support the university has grown from

**\$7 MILLION**

a year to

**\$77 MILLION**



(continued from p. 24.)

helped found the Roundabout Art Collective. "It allowed me to find my own place," she says. "I met so many people who weren't connected to NC State. It's given me a life."

For his part, Randy Woodson immersed himself in his love of music when he wasn't busy running the university and joined a bluegrass group. That skill was later put to use in an official setting when he and his guitar joined Scotty McCreery and later B.J. Barham (with the band American Aquarium) on stage at Packapalooza. Music and cooking helped him keep stress levels at bay. Woodson was often seen at Fresh Market in the Village District as he stopped by to get ingredients for the evening menu. (A go-to recipe is on this page.)

When the Woodsons moved in, planning was already underway for a new, larger chancellor's residence on Centennial Campus. One of the first decisions the new chancellor had to make was how best to use the stately 1928 home on Hillsborough Street once the new residence was complete. He was shown a set of proposals that included an admissions office and

an art museum. It was a no-brainer, Woodson says. "I learned that the Gregg Museum, which was housed in Talley and not very visible, had very little space. . . . And I had just met Phil Freelon, who was this amazing NC State architect."

Susan Woodson spearheaded the campaign to raise money for the venture, and the Gregg Museum of Art & Design opened in 2017 with a new modern wing designed by Freelon, a 1975 graduate.

As the Woodsons walk through the building that was once their home, admiring the art and exhibits of the Gregg, they are quick to recount fond memories of their time there. Many involve their dogs. Their labradoodle, Mr. Beasley, would often escape and end up at the Players Retreat. "He would go over to the PR and beg french fries," Randy Woodson says, "and Gus [Gusler] would call me and say, 'Chancellor, your dog's over here.'"

Susan Woodson recalls hosting an event shortly after they moved in when she was preparing to greet former Gov. Jim Hunt '58 and his wife, Carolyn, at the door. Just then, their dog Georgia brought in a baby possum.

### Chancellor's Chicken Piccata

Randy Woodson loves to cook. That suits Susan Woodson just fine. Here's his go-to recipe for the family, in his own words.

*"Put boneless chicken breasts between Saran wrap and pound them to about a quarter inch thick. Flour them, then run them through eggs and buttermilk. Briefly cook in butter and a little olive oil to crisp them up. Then put them in a 350 degree oven to finish.*

*While they are finishing, melt more butter in the pan and squeeze a couple of lemons. Add lemon juice to the pan and then put the lemon halves upside down and let them sit in the pan with juices. Add some chicken broth and let it reduce. You can add a little flour to the sauce to thicken. Finish with capers. I serve it beside rice and pour that sauce all over it. Add a vegetable and it's great with a nice cold Chardonnay."*





## PLENTY OF RED

Woodson doesn't know how many red ties he has.

"I don't own any that aren't red," he says. "I have a whole rack of them."

("But I'm not going to sew them together and make a quilt out of them like some people do," Susan Woodson adds. "Not doing that.")

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARC HALL '90 MA, NC STATE



"I said, 'Oh my God, it's dead,'" she says. "I went to get a shovel to get it out of the doorway to get it out of the house. It wasn't dead, and by the time I got there it had scooted out." As the Hunts walked up the steps to the door, she saw the possum making its way across the yard behind them, dragging one leg.

After a big athletic win, students who gathered at the Belltower would sometimes walk next door and stand in front of the chancellor's house. "Once our kids were visiting and we beat Duke in basketball," Randy Woodson says. "Patrick came up to me



and said, 'Dad, there's a student riot outside.' I said, no they're just excited that we beat Duke. I went up to a window and opened it up and gave them a little wave and they all left."

### What's next?

The Woodsons moved to The Point on Centennial Campus in 2011. The larger home made entertaining and holding events to welcome alumni much easier, Susan Woodson says. Occasionally alumni and visitors would mistake the house for the Park Alumni Center just down the road, and families sometimes showed up for a Christmas photo in front of the house. "Once there was a group out there, and I came out in my chef's apron," the chancellor says, "and got in the picture."

As they prepare to leave NC State, the Woodsons are looking forward

to spending time in their retirement home not far from campus, where Randy Woodson has already established a garden. "This is our home," Randy Woodson says. "Our kids live here, and we have established a life here." But he added, "I promise you this — I am not going to get in the way of the next chancellor." As for other pursuits, he demurred. "I've got my guitars," he says.

Susan Woodson will continue creating art, which can be found at the Five Points Gallery in Durham. And just as her husband left a physical legacy on campus, Susan Woodson's presence is felt as well. She pushed for a public art project on Centennial Campus that could be a destination and a gathering place. That project, "Reds and Whites," by renowned sculptor Larry Bell, was dedicated in May and the plaza named in honor of Susan Woodson. (See photo, p. 1)

Randy Woodson was asked in the spring 2010 issue of *NC State* magazine what attracted him to NC State. He answered that the university had a clear understanding of its mission and a passion for connecting that mission to the people of North Carolina and the nation. "When I thought about moving," Woodson said, "I wanted to have enough time in a job, if I'm successful, to have an impact."

We say goodbye, Chancellor, and in our estimation, time well spent. ■

**On the Web:**  
[transformation.ncsu.edu](http://transformation.ncsu.edu)



### CAMPUS ADDRESS July 18, 2024

*"We have experienced so much together in my time as your Chancellor. From extraordinary growth in enrollment, growing demand for admission, dramatic improvements in retention and graduation rates to incredible discoveries and innovation in research to new facilities and a changing campus landscape and so much more... We've grown the university's endowment and we took on — and surpassed — the most ambitious fundraising campaign in our history. All of this helps to ensure our university will be in a strong position to continue our extraordinary service to the people of North Carolina."*

**RANDY WOODSON**

