Good business sense and a genial Southern manner helped make Howard Rooks ’55 a success in real estate.

The same goodwill that helped him succeed in business inspired him to create the W. Howard Rooks Distinguished Professor of Business at the College of Business at ECU. The endowment supports the business dean in promoting excellence in teaching at the college.

“Being a country boy from a farm in eastern North Carolina, it was quite an event for me to attend ECU. I feel that it helped launch me into a career,” says Rooks, who now lives in Sarasota, Florida. “The warmth and the friendliness of the faculty and other students meant that every day was a learning experience.”

He later started a real estate brokerage agency in Alexandria, Virginia, outside Washington, D.C., that became the 13th-largest independent company of its type in the nation.

As the sitting Rooks Professor, Dr. Fredrick Niswander believes the endowment will help keep the College of Business abreast of advanced professional innovations. “We need to be aware of what other colleges are doing, so we can look for ways to do it better,” Niswander says. “We need to be on the leading edge in our field and position ourselves strategically in business education.”

The Rooks professorship helps support faculty recruitment and the college’s distinctive national accreditation by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. The professorship also enhances the college’s reputation in other ways. “It gives the college greater validity and visibility,” Niswander says.

For Rooks, endowing this professorship was a simple way to honor the university that gave him so much.

“It was an important passage for me,” he says of his years at ECU. “Coming from a small town, suddenly I was transplanted to a student body that was at that time over 2,000. You worked hard to establish yourself and feel like you were productive.”

“I’ve always felt a real sense of loyalty to ECU,” he says. “I was glad I could help.”