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Contact: Kathy Muse, College of Health and Human Performance, (252) 328-5555 or musek@ecu.edu

College of Health and Human Performance alumnus pledges $333,000 to establish first endowed distinguished professorship

GREENVILLE, N.C. (August 31, 2010) – The president of Wingate University pledged funding to establish the first endowed professorship at the College of Health and Human Performance at East Carolina University.

Dr. Jerry E. McGee, who graduated from ECU in 1965, has pledged $333,000 to the university to establish the Jerry E. McGee Distinguished Professorship in the College of Health and Human Performance. This gift will qualify for state matching funds from the Distinguished Professors Endowment Trust Fund created by the N.C. General Assembly.

Dr. Glen Gilbert, dean of the College of Health and Human Performance, said of the donation, “We are deeply grateful to Jerry McGee for his generous commitment. This landmark donation will create a legacy that celebrates his inspiring history with the college and is especially promising in the current economic climate where competition to recruit exceptional faculty continues to increase.

“Like so many of ECU students, he embodies the American dream that determination and an education can make a bright future possible. He grew up with little or no financial resources and sometimes had to literally fight his way to and from school. A college education was only a distant dream,” Gilbert said.

A first generation college student, McGee looked up to his East Carolina professors since they were some of the only people he knew who had graduated from college.

Among his fondest memories at ECU are the strong bonds he developed with faculty and peers. He was a member of the Phi Epsilon Kappa fraternity and affectionately recalls being a member of the successful 1963 varsity baseball team.

Although he enjoyed sports, he also remembers spending many nights studying with fellow classmates such as Jimmie Grimsley, Charles Jenkins and Jack Bobbitt who remained lifelong friends.

As a student, McGee was especially close to Dr. Clint Strong and Coach Jack Boone. Strong demonstrated incredible patience and Boone hired McGee as the student director of intramural programs, the income from which allowed him to stay in school. “These two men inspired me to become a serious student and a better person,” McGee said.

McGee said he made the commitment to establish the professorship because the university changed the course of his life with the college degree he earned at ECU.

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“No matter how much money I contribute, I will never be able to repay ECU for what the institution did for my family,” McGee said. “All of our teachers were totally dedicated to giving us every opportunity to succeed at ECU and beyond.”

A native of Rockingham, McGee earned a bachelor's degree from the College of Health and Human Performance in 1965 and holds a master's degree from Appalachian State University and a doctorate from Nova University.

In addition to his role at Wingate University, McGee also served in administrative roles at Gardner-Webb University, Meredith College and Furman University.

He enjoyed officiating college football games for 36 years, working over 400 games, including three National Championship games. Also crediting his alma mater for developing this talent and skill, McGee said the first game he officiated was in the ECU intramural program. He joked that if you can successfully serve as an official in the fraternity championship game at ECU, you can handle the Rose Bowl.

In 2006, McGee received The Order of the Long Leaf Pine in recognition of his extraordinary service to the state of North Carolina and in 2008, ECU recognized him with the Outstanding Alumni Award

McGee has two sons who live in Charlotte, Ryan, a senior writer with ESPN The Magazine and Sam, who is a litigator and a partner in the firm of Jackson & McGee. McGee is married to Marcella McInnis of High Point.