

March 2005

Good morning. I'm Catherine Rigsby, Chair of the Faculty, and I'm happy to be here on an occasion that is so important to our University and region.

A university is a microcosm of disciplines, philosophies, and influences. The challenges it faces reflect the challenges of our communities, our nation, and the world. Plotting a course for the university requires both openness and the vision to avoid often unseen shoals and shallows.

Such obstacles can be defined by lost opportunities, but also by the light of possibilities – possibilities that must be navigated beyond precedence and history.

What is needed, is an independent leader with the wisdom and strength to chart our course into the future.

Historically, we've had many of these:

- Robert Wright, who (in the 1920s) opposed those who wanted state laws forbidding the teaching of Darwin's evolutionary theories in our science classrooms;
- John Messick, who (in the summer of 1957) led the push for racial integration on our campus;
- and Leo Jenkins, who (in the early 1960s) opposed state legislation to ban communist speakers on college campuses.

Each of these former chancellors was here at a tempestuous moment in the political and social growth of our nation and culture. The decisions they made reflected the forward thinking and stalwart leadership that have served both our university and our community well.

We've now come to an equally critical time in our nation, our community, and even our university. We have both the opportunity and the potential to rise to the next level of scholastic and societal excellence. But, we need the right leader . . .

In the 10 months I have worked with him, I can confidently say that Dr. Steve Ballard is the right person, with the right skills, at the right time to chart ECU's course toward prominence.

I'm proud to serve as the Chair of the Faculty at this important moment with this unique, capable, independent leader.

Dr. Ballard, the faculty of East Carolina University look forward to working with you as, together, we chart our institution's new course.