



UNC President Margaret Spellings
Nomination of Cecil Staton as Chancellor, East Carolina University
April 27, 2016

Mr. Chairman, it is my great pleasure today to recommend to the Board of Governors a strong, experienced and energetic new leader for East Carolina University.

But first let me express my thanks to Steve Ballard for the remarkable leadership he has shown at ECU over the past 12 years. Under his steady leadership, ECU has raised the bar with respect to academic excellence, service, and community engagement—not to mention intercollegiate athletics.

During his tenure, ECU has developed a truly statewide impact, greatly expanded program offerings in key targeted fields, helped to promote regional economic development, and improved access to high-quality medical care. By any measure, Steve will leave ECU stronger and better than he found it, and that's quite a legacy.

Thank you, Steve.

I'd now like to call on Steve Jones, chair of the ECU Board of Trustees and its Chancellor Search Committee, for a brief summary of the search process. While Steve makes his way up here, let me thank the entire search committee for the great work they have done.

[Steve Jones describes comprehensive search process.]

Members of the Board of Governors, I am delighted today to recommend to you the election of Dr. Cecil P. Staton, interim president of Valdosta State University in Georgia and vice chancellor for extended education for the University System of Georgia, as the next chancellor of East Carolina University.

When I met with the Chancellor Search Committee back in December, I asked them to identify strong candidates who understood how far ECU has come under Chancellor Ballard's leadership, and who had the experience and skills and passion needed to build on those achievements. I stressed that we needed to attract an individual who truly understood ECU's mission, its strengths, challenges, and enormous potential to better serve eastern North Carolina and the entire state, and who could articulate a vision for taking the institution to the next level.

I also urged them to help find a strong leader with exceptional communication skills, a decisive yet inclusive leadership style, a commitment to the larger community, and a proven track record of excellence and public service. I wanted someone who would be a great partner for me and our other chancellors. And most of all, I urged the Committee to identify a leader with absolute integrity.

The Search Committee and I found all those qualities and more in Cecil Staton. Dr. Staton brings to the role of chancellor a rare blend of leadership experience in higher education, the private sector and elected public office, as well as a practical understanding of how to bring diverse constituencies and organizations together to get things done. During a varied 30-year career, he has proven himself to be an energetic and effective leader who encourages strategic thinking, promotes collaboration and inclusiveness, and understands the power of education to change lives, families, and communities.

He has also earned a reputation for great integrity, sound decision-making, and a strong commitment to community engagement and outreach. I am convinced that Dr. Staton has the right mix of experience, skills, and commitment needed to lead ECU in the years ahead, and I am thrilled that he has agreed to join our leadership team.

Dr. Staton has served as vice chancellor for extended education for the University System of Georgia, which includes 29 public colleges and universities that collectively enroll more than 318,000 students. In that role, he oversees system efforts related to international education, continuing and professional education, entrepreneurial education, and military affairs.

He is also USG's liaison with the Georgia Research Alliance and supports USG's economic development initiatives and efforts to match the resources of USG institutions with Georgia's evolving workforce needs.

Since last summer, Dr. Staton has also served as interim president of Valdosta State University, a regional USG institution with about 11,300 students. As interim president, he has focused on retention, improving student success, and better marketing and branding to reverse recent enrollment declines and associated budget shortfalls.

He has also worked to expand VSU's e-learning offerings and competency-based education plan. As a result, applications for fall 2016 are up 60 percent over last year and a capital campaign has raised more than \$46 million.

Dr. Staton was born and raised in Greenville, SC., where he attended Furman University as a first-generation college student and earned a bachelor's degree in religion. He also holds master of divinity and theology degrees from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Winston-Salem, and a doctorate in Old Testament, Hebrew, and ancient Near Eastern studies from the University of Oxford in England.

Dr. Staton began his academic career at Brewton-Parker College in Mount Vernon, GA, where he was an assistant professor of religion. He then spent 12 years at Mercer University in Macon, GA—a multi-campus institution with key professional programs including medicine, nursing, pharmacy, engineering, law, business, and education—where he was an associate professor, associate provost, and university publisher. In addition to teaching in the College of Liberal Arts and serving as a university administrator, he led Mercer's University Press.

Dr. Staton's extensive private-sector experience has included founding and leading three communications companies: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, a publisher of books and curriculum products; Stroud and Hall Publishers, a publisher of books on politics and current events; and Georgia Eagle Media, a holding company for broadcasting, newspaper, and media properties.

In 2004, Dr. Staton was elected to the first of five terms in the Georgia State Senate. During his ten years in the legislature, he served as vice chairman of the Senate Republican Caucus, Majority Whip, and on a number of committees affecting higher education.

For two terms, he chaired the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher Education, responsible for the state's \$2-billion annual investment in higher education. He also served as vice chair of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Community Health, championing efforts to enlarge Georgia's healthcare workforce. Following his retirement from the Senate in 2014, he accepted his current post with the University System of Georgia.

His many awards and honors include the Georgia Independent College Association's Miller-Deal Award for significant public service in higher education, as well as Legislator of the Year awards from the Georgia Hospital Association, Georgia Technology Association, and Georgia Rural Health Care Association. He also holds an honorary doctorate from Mercer University and received the inaugural Richard B. Furman Award from Furman University. He currently serves on the board of directors of the Georgia Chamber of Commerce and the board of visitors of the University of Georgia.

Dr. Staton and his wife, Catherine, have two sons: "Trey," a financial planner in Atlanta; and William, a student at DePaul University in Chicago.

Mr. Chairman, it is my great privilege to recommend to the Board of Governors the election of Dr. Cecil Staton as chancellor of East Carolina University, effective July 1, 2016, at an annual salary of \$450,000.

Acceptance Remarks: Cecil P. Staton

April 27, 2016

Good afternoon. Catherine and I are enormously pleased to be here today. We are truly humbled by the trust that you have placed in us. We are grateful that our oldest son, Cecil III, is with us. He is a financial planner in Atlanta. And we regret our youngest son William, a sophomore at DePaul University in Chicago, cannot be here as he is in the midst of mid-term exams this week. We have a new favorite color as of today!

I am mindful of the fact that in coming to East Carolina University I will be standing upon the tall shoulders of those who have gone before, people like Chancellor Leo Jenkins who provided visionary leadership for 18 years, who fought for the medical school recognizing the impact it would have upon eastern North Carolina. And of course, I am grateful for the leadership of Chancellor Ballard over the last 12 years. We have much to be grateful for.

I must express my gratitude to President Spellings and the entire Board of Governors of the university system, and particularly our local board member Henry Hinton, who served as liaison to the search committee. I am grateful for the confidence you have placed in me.

I am also very indebted to all who served on your search committee, and participated in this process. Under the leadership of Chairman Steve Jones, this institution was well represented. The love for ECU I heard in their voices and saw in their eyes and upon their faces was contagious and certainly

contributed to our willingness to consider this journey and to accept the invitation to unite with you in the noble cause of advancing the heritage of excellence that is reflected in every facet of East Carolina University.

These are certainly challenging times for public higher education, as we seek to deal with constrained state funding, increased state and federal regulations, the disruptive nature of technology, demographic changes, changes in health care, and growing, even fierce competition, just to name a few.

I am here today, however, because I am convinced that East Carolina University is in a unique position not only to persevere, but to thrive in the current climate of change. I became convinced through this process that ECU understands the necessity to be an innovative institution that always puts students first. This search experience has revealed to me a superlative faculty, a remarkable range of assets reflected in ECU's colleges and schools, a student centered staff, great athletic traditions, terrifically engaged and capable students, and wonderful community support for ECU, and most of all a commitment to excellence, that was in evidence everywhere we turned during this search process.

You should know something about me. When I arrived at Furman University in the fall of 1976, I came from a family where my father fixed shoes for a living. He never finished high school. My mother, an incredibly smart lady, who will turn 80 next month, who still gets up and goes to work every day at a business she helped start in 1977, did not have the resources or tradition within her family that would allow her to get a college degree. But my parents sacrificed so that I could get an education. My journey included many wonderful professors who were mentors. It led me from Furman to two master's degrees and an opportunity to do my doctoral work in the lofty academic environment of the University of Oxford. That was quite an unexpected journey for a kid who grew up with a textile mill in the back yard.

My journey led to my being a faculty member, a university administrator, a time as CEO of private businesses, and to a decade-long tenure in the Georgia Senate where I was the chief cheerleader for public higher education and chair of the committee, responsible for the \$2 billion annual investment Georgia taxpayers make in higher education. It led me to a leadership position at the University System of Georgia, a stint as president on one of that system's campuses, and today it brings me to the wonderful opportunity to join this fine university community as your next chancellor for ECU.

My life is a testament to the promise of American and to the power of higher education to change lives, families, communities, and even the world. I am proud to join you today in what is the grandest of enterprises—public higher education. I come to ECU with gratitude for the history and heritage of this institution that now intersects with my journey, accomplishments, and commitments. I want you to know that I am fully committed to ECU's mission of student success, public service, and regional transformation.

I am here today because I am convinced that ECU can and will provide leadership while responding to the challenges facing public higher education.

While the waters of change may be shifting beneath our feet, At ECU we will remain committed to finding the next generation of solutions. Or as Leo Jenkins used to say, "It's not what we build today—its what we become tomorrow."

We are fortunate to have incredible resources at East Carolina that must be harnessed to transform our region of the state and beyond. At ECU we will prepare the teachers for our schools, the nurses,

dentists, and physicians for our hospitals and communities, the business leaders who will advance our economy, and we will prepare educated citizens who will lead a competitive and prepared workforce.

We will embrace our mission to be a comprehensive public research university while aspiring to be an innovative world-class institution. We will measure our success not as others do who boast about how many students they turn away. Rather we will measure our success by the students we include and embrace, and by how well they fulfill their dreams and succeed. We will pursue a growing research and discovery agenda that benefits the public good; and we will assume fundamental responsibility for the economic, social, and cultural vitality, as well as the health and well-being of the community and region we serve. And we will embrace our student athletes and encourage them as they achieve excellence both in the classroom and on the field of competition.

I am confident that if we embrace those commitments, the future of ECU is secured and our potential impact for good is unlimited.

Thank you for this wonderful opportunity. Catherine and I are so very proud to join the Pirate Nation and to labor with you at this incredible university! Go pirates!