

Gaston College President Will Retire In 2020

By Administrator

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DALLAS, N.C. – Gaston College President Dr. Patricia Skinner has announced her plans to retire in March 2020. The announcement marks a milestone in her more than 50-year career in higher education in Michigan, Ohio, and North Carolina. In August of this year, she will have served as President of Gaston College for 25 years. She is the first woman and fourth president to lead the 2-year community college that serves Gaston and Lincoln counties.

“It has been an honor and privilege to serve as president of Gaston College. I came at a time when the College was poised for growth and expansion,” said Dr. Patricia Skinner. “This college has become an integral part of Gaston and Lincoln counties, and I am grateful for the tremendous support the College has received over the years from our many talented students, dedicated faculty and staff, community, county and state-wide partners, members of our Foundation and Textile Technology Boards, and the College’s Board of Trustees. Together, we have built an institution focused on quality education and student success, and I am proud that we have become one of the top community colleges of the 58 in North Carolina,” said President Skinner.

“We reluctantly accept her decision and are forever grateful for all she’s done for the College and will continue to do in this next year,” said Dr. Jim Watson, Chair of the Gaston College Board of Trustees. “Thanks to Dr. Skinner’s vision and leadership, the College has experienced unprecedented growth since she became president more than 24 years ago. She and her dedicated team of faculty and staff have prepared this institution to serve the students, businesses, and industries in our counties for many years to come.”

“On behalf of the Board of Trustees, we are grateful to Dr. Skinner for her commitment to our students, our great college, and the citizens of Gaston and Lincoln counties and the state,” said Watson.

Dr. Jim Watson has worked with President Skinner since he joined the Gaston College Board of Trustees in 2008 and has served as its Chair since 2016. He will be instrumental in leading the search process to find a successor to President Skinner and indicated that information regarding the search will be announced at a later time.

During her presidency, Dr. Skinner has always been committed to student success and

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excellence. Some of her major accomplishments include:

- Focus on the quality of the learning environment for students through the expansion of program opportunities and new and renovated facilities;
- Obtaining financial support from the community, state, and federal government through donations and grants;
- Hiring and retaining the best-qualified faculty and staff who have been committed to student success and have developed creative and innovative programs and services;
- Support to business and industry through customized training, apprenticeships and work-based learning opportunities—Gaston College is #2 in North Carolina in terms of customized training funds for new and expanding industries;
- Evidence of quality through specialized voluntary accreditations and student success through student completions, graduations, and awards such as the Jack Kent Cooke Scholarship, which our students have received;
- Partnerships with Gaston and Lincoln County Schools through dual enrollment programs and the establishment of the Gaston Early College High School;
- National and state recognition for excellence for faculty and staff as well as the College becoming an Achieving the Dream Leader College, and receiving the prestigious Bellwether and Bellwether Legacy Awards.

Since becoming president in August 1994, Dr. Skinner has led Gaston College through significant growth. When she started, the College was comprised of only its main campus in Dallas, N.C., but has since added the W. Duke Kimbrell Campus & Textile Technology Center in Belmont, N.C., and its Lincoln Campus in Lincolnton, N.C. During her tenure, the College has expanded its instructional and administrative space from 371,294 to 793,264 square feet with the addition of 11 buildings. The newest building—the Veterinary Medical Technology Facility—is scheduled to open on the Dallas Campus in 2020.

In 1965, Gaston College's first graduating class consisted of six students. The first graduating

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class during Dr. Skinner's tenure consisted of 347 students. In 2018, the College had its highest number of graduates with 1,455 students.

Gaston College is regionally accredited by The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. During Dr. Skinner's presidency, the College expanded to over 170 programs of study, 60 degrees, 26 diplomas, and 87 certificates. In addition to the College's regional accreditation, 12 programs of study have received specific program level national accreditation.

President Skinner holds a doctorate in Higher Education Administration from Ohio State University, a Master's Degree, Bachelor's Degree, and Specialist of Arts Degree from Western Michigan University. Her career began in the classroom as an instructor of business, office administration, and management at colleges and universities in Michigan, Massachusetts, and Ohio.

Before coming to North Carolina, Dr. Skinner was an administrator for the Ohio Board of Regents and served as vice president of academic and student affairs at Clark State Community College in Springfield, Ohio.

Dr. Skinner has served on many professional boards in various capacities including President of the North Carolina Association of Community College Presidents, and Chair of the Charlotte Area Education Consortium, Gaston Together, and the North Carolina Student Success Center Advisory Board.

She is also the recipient of numerous distinguished awards, including the NC Student Success Center Champion Award; Gastonia Rotary Paul Harris Fellow Recognition; Distinguished Partners in Excellence Award, given by the North Carolina Community College System; Wells Fargo President of the Year Award, also given by the North Carolina Community College System; Wisdom of Solomon Award, given by Temple Emanuel in Gastonia, N.C.; Southern Regional CEO of the Year Award, given by the Association of Community College Trustees; Women's Heritage Award, given by the Community Spirit USA, International Ministries; Woman of the Year Award, given by the Gaston County Women's Commission; Athena Award, given by Citizens South Bank and the Gaston Chamber of Commerce; Gaston County Hall of Fame for Women in Business; and Women Administrators in North Carolina Higher Education Leadership Award.

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