

FALL 2019

# CAMPBELL

MAGAZINE



14 DECADES OF AMAZING, TRAILBLAZING

# WOMEN

WHO SHAPED CAMPBELL UNIVERSITY



14 DECADES OF AMAZING, TRAILBLAZING

# WOMEN

WHO SHAPED CAMPBELL UNIVERSITY





ILLUSTRATIONS BY  
AMANDA DOCKERY  
STORIES BY  
KATE STONEBURNER  
AND BILLY LIGGETT



# CORNELIA CAMPBELL

## FROM STUDENT TO LEADER, THE TRUE CAMPBELL MATRIARCH

**O**n the first day of classes, Jan. 5, 1887, an 18-year-old Cornelia Pearson entered the schoolhouse doors of Buies Creek Academy as a student and was immediately put to work as a teacher.

She was asked to take charge of the youngest of the children, schooling them alongside J.A. Campbell, the academy's founder. From that day on — until the day he died in 1934 — she would be by his side, teaching, praying, planning and directing. Cornelia quickly rose from teacher to assistant principal and business manager, and became Mrs. J.A. Campbell in 1890.

Cornelia Campbell spent the next few decades of her life supporting the Campbell community through the uncertainty of the early Buies Creek Academy days. With a calm and reserved disposition, she faced down the crises of the early years, including a fire that burned campus to the ground in 1900, a food shortage and financial insecurities. She labored daily behind the scenes, working night and day to provide vegetables and fruits from the farm for the meals served in the dining room.

When students had nowhere to live on campus, Miss Cornelia, or “Miss Neelie,” as her neighbors affectionately called her, opened her home for them to stay with the Campbell family.

Cornelia Campbell was an avid reader who reportedly could come across a book in her home while cleaning, open it up to skim through it, put the dust cloth or broom down and read the entire book in one sitting before returning to her task. She moved into a house across the street from Campbell's main campus after her husband's death in 1934. That house is now home to Campbell's Office of Alumni Engagement and Office of Annual Giving, and formerly housed the Home Economics department, honors students, and undergraduate admissions.

Without her hard work, resourcefulness and hospitality in the early days of the University, it is difficult to know whether those offices would even exist today.





# VIRGINIA KIVETT

## HER SACRIFICE MEANT THE ACADEMY WOULD LIVE ON

**V**irginia Kivett was 15 when she left home with her father and three older brothers — she was one of 11 children in all — to rebuild Buies Creek Academy brick by brick after a fire wiped out the small school in December 1900.

The story of Z.T. Kivett's heroic gesture has been forever etched into Campbell University lore, but the sacrifices of young Virginia deserve equal billing. Her contributions began by going door to door throughout Harnett County asking for nickels and dimes to pay for the bricks that would one day become Kivett Hall. When she and her brothers joined their father on the other side of the Cape Fear River to begin construction, they first built a small shanty that would become their home for the next 24 months.

Virginia's teenage years were spent cooking and caring for the boys (not just her family, but the entire camp), cleaning their makeshift home and sleeping on what amounted to wood planks. She only saw her mother and younger siblings on Sundays — there's was a household of open affection, and it was difficult for young Virginia to be apart from them for so long. She worked tirelessly and just as hard as the men for the other six days.

But there was reward in her sacrifice. While her brothers were forced to stop attending school for the two years that they worked, being so close to the campus meant Virginia was able to continue her education with school founder J.A. Campbell, his wife Cornelia and the other teachers who remained.

She graduated from Buies Creek Academy in 1907, four years after the completion of Kivett Hall, which today remains Campbell University's oldest and most iconic building and a visible testament to the school's motto, *ad astra per aspera* — "to the stars, through difficulty."

Following graduation, Virginia's contributions to her school continued. She taught elementary children at Buies Creek Academy for the next 20 years, and she remained an active alumna, friend and advocate of the school all the way up to her death in 1966 at the age of 80.

# GLADYS STRICKLAND

## TRUSTED CREEK PEBBLES ADVISOR AND MASCOT NAMESAKE

She was among a trio of professors who joined the newly named Campbell Junior College in the 1920s — author J. Winston Pearce once wrote, “[Their] work and influence were so great that thousands of students would find it forever impossible to think of the school without thinking of them.”

But Gladys Strickland’s relationship with the school started much earlier as a Buies Creek Academy student from 1914-1920. She returned home and joined the staff in 1925 after earning her degree from Meredith College and taught French, English and journalism for 28 years until her marriage and subsequent retirement from higher education in 1953.

Sporting her signature spectacles and Marcel wave bobbed hairstyle, Strickland was said to be a hard taskmaster in the classroom, but she brought to her teaching a charm, enthusiasm and deep belief in the value of education that was contagious with her students and fellow faculty members. She knew her students as individuals — understood their strengths and weaknesses and dug deep to bring out their potential.

It was written that “sacrifice” was her hobby; her students her first love.

Nowhere was her guidance and dedication more evident than with her journalism students who ran the *Creek Pebbles* newspaper during her tenure. For a small, private school tucked away in rural North Carolina, *Creek Pebbles* was a beacon of solid, balanced journalism that served as the running journal of an era of considerable growth and important history for the school.

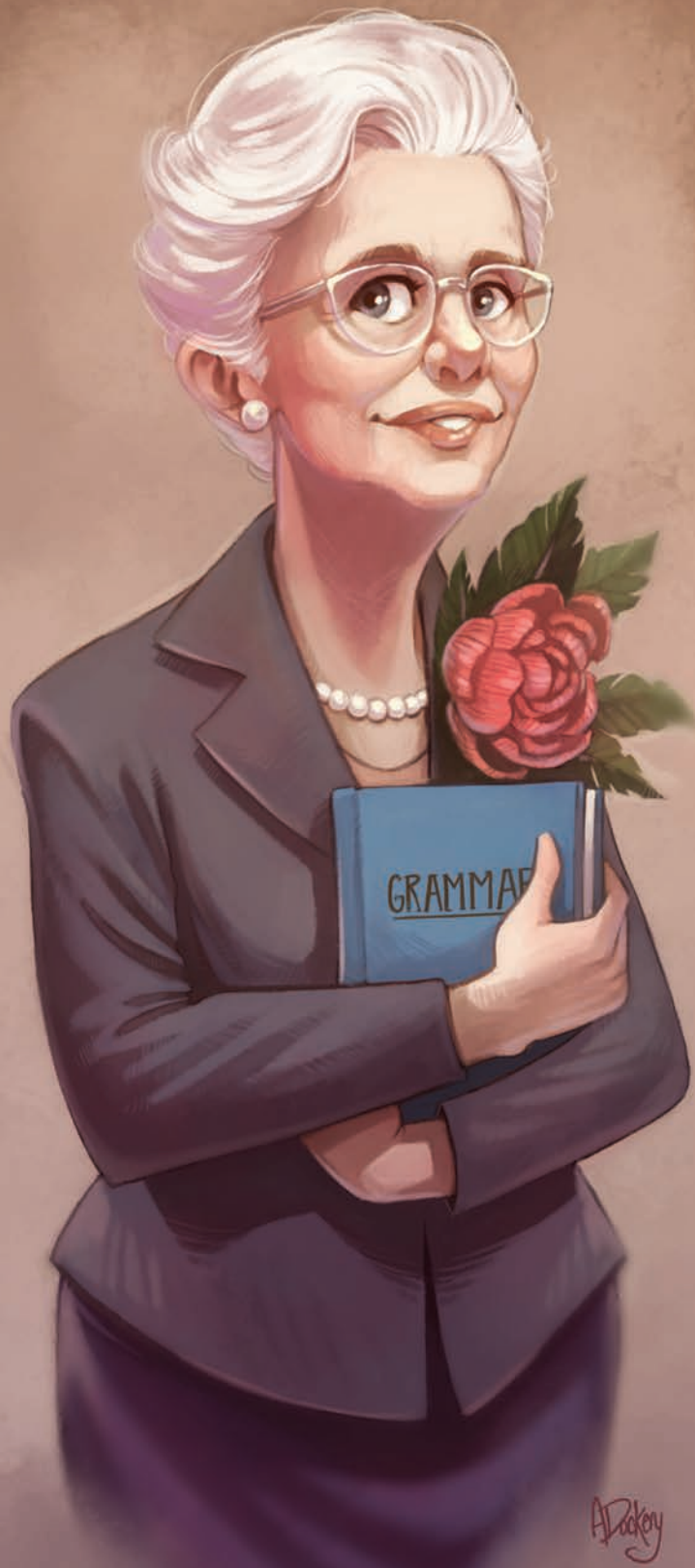
Many of her students went on to successful careers in communications, and many credit her with their success.

She became Gladys Satterwhite with her marriage in 1953 and moved to Oxford, North Carolina, where she taught high school until her “official” retirement several years later. Over the next 42 years, until her death in 1995, she remained close to Campbell. Her impact was so great and her name so memorable, the school named its short-lived female camel mascot Gladys in the late 1980s. Gladys the mascot made her triumphant return in 2019 — further continuing the legacy of the woman who made her mark on Campbell University over a century earlier.





A. Rocky



# MABEL POWELL

## UNDERDOG WITH A CONTAGIOUS PASSION FOR GRAMMAR

**B**urgess Marshbanks — a 96-year-old living, breathing encyclopedia on all things Campbell University related — speaks for generations of alumni who learned proper grammar from the legendary Mabel Powell. “If you’re going to build a monument to any woman on this campus, build it to her.”

Hers is an underdog story unlike any other in the school’s 132-year history. Diagnosed with a serious spinal illness as the age of 5, Powell’s doctor told her family she probably wouldn’t survive it, and if she did, she’d most certainly never walk again.

She did survive it, though her childhood and early adulthood meant wearing heavy braces on her back and legs and sleeping on a steel bed to keep her spine straight. The illness returned in 1918, when she was just 24, and doctors again gave Powell very little chance to survive. Not only did she live, but she got better. Powell was walking within a year, and her newfound health inspired her to finish her education. She earned degrees from Georgetown College in Kentucky and later UNC Chapel Hill.

She was 30 years old, stood just under 5 feet tall and weighed 84 pounds when she began pursuing a career in teaching. Despite her academic prowess, Powell’s applications were all rejected. The reason for each was the same: “Unfit for the rigors of classroom teaching.”

Campbell President J.A. Campbell took a chance in 1924 and hired Powell to teach English and Latin. She would remain at the school for the next 43 years. Her impact is well documented. A stickler for proper grammar, Powell authored “Outline of Fundamentals of English” — a famous little powder blue book that remained in Campbell English classrooms long after her retirement.

She was dedicated to her profession and to the school that gave her a chance. She worked for very little money in those early years and took as little as \$30 a month during the Great Depression so the school could afford to stay afloat. When President Leslie Campbell brought his 19 faculty members into his office in 1935 to suggest the school close for the spring semester because of financial troubles, it was Powell who stood up and declared that those 19 would die first before letting their school perish.

Leslie Campbell would later say of his friend, “Who can doubt that this great teacher of queenly character was divinely directed to Campbell College in our time?”

# BERNADETTE WOODLIEF HOYLE

ACCLAIMED BIOGRAPHER BROUGHT EARLY CAMPBELL HISTORY TO LIFE

**D**escribed as one of North Carolina's top-flight newspaper-women and press photographers, Bernadette Hoyle penned the biography of J.A. Campbell that has kept his and the school's history alive for future generations. A central figure in the literary life of North Carolina, she was an award-winning author, photographer, publicist and journalist.

Hoyle was widely respected by the working press of North Carolina for her knack for interviewing and reporting skills. She was equally at home at a wreck, a murder trial, a hurricane or a wedding. She covered events of national importance, ranging from presidential campaigns to the "Miss America" pageant, and interviewed numerous celebrities, including Margaret Truman, Eleanor Roosevelt and Ava Gardner. Hoyle was a member of the North Carolina Press Women, the Carolinas Press Photographers Association, the North Carolina Writers Conference and the Smithfield Women's Club.

Far from being placed the "stuffy research" genre, her writing style brought men and women to life. Some of Hoyle's best friends were also writers, and she introduced thirty-five of them with her words and her camera in her 1956 book, "Tar Heel Writers I Know." As a biographer, Hoyle was never content to just set down facts. She let her subjects talk freely and caught their personalities in her work.

Hoyle recorded details of Campbell University's founding family that are still recalled today. Cornelia Campbell once told Hoyle that her husband had a playful spirit and "the saving grace of good humor." The statue of J.A. Campbell in front of Kivett Hall takes on a new personality when students read that once in a blue moon, Campbell would shave his mustache "just to see what people would say ... for he'd worn it so long that he looked strange without it." Thanks to Hoyle, we know that when J.A. Campbell sat in shock after the campus burned to the ground in 1900, Z.T. Kivett encouraged him to persevere and rebuild.

Hoyle was called "a remarkable woman ahead of her time." She served as director of public information for the State Board of Public Welfare and later for the North Carolina Council on Developmental Disabilities. She also served as writer for the North Carolina Democratic Party Executive Committee. There was no greater fan and supporter of North Carolina's writers, whether published or aspiring.





A. P. Key

# DOROTHEA STEWART-GILBERT

## DO-IT-ALL FIXTURE ON CAMPUS AND KEEPER OF SCHOOL HISTORY

**S**ome of Dorothea Stewart-Gilbert's earliest memories are of her grandfather driving a buggy down present-day Main Street back when Campbell University was still Buies Creek Academy.

A Buies Creek native, she was born about a mile from main campus and is perhaps the only woman of Campbell who has known all five university presidents.

She attended elementary school (grades second through seventh) in the 1930s in the Kivett Building at Campbell, and then high school in the D. Rich Building, which stands just a few feet away. She graduated from Campbell Junior College in 1946 before earning a bachelor's degree in English at Western Carolina.

Her teaching career began two years later at Buies Creek High School, where she made \$150 a month teaching English, French, world history and first aid; coaching basketball and football; directing two theatrical plays a year; and planning all graduating activities.

She became an instructor at Campbell Junior College in the 1960s and went on to teach for 32 years before serving as curator of the Lundy-Fetterman Museum & Exhibit Hall. Under her direction, the museum dropped its ropes and allowed guests to touch and feel the pronghorn antelope, goitered gazelle, Persian ibex and blue marlin on display for the first time. She agreed to allow a group of local students up-close contact with the animals — strictly forbidden for guests — if they agreed to simply bring their own gloves.

As a Campbell student before World War II, Stewart-Gilbert lived with regulations unheard of on campus today. Church attendance was required, and she and her peers had to sign out before they could leave the dorm, making sure that they were properly attired in hats, gloves and high heels.

Her memories of Cornelia Campbell and other figureheads of early University history have been vital to historical projects at Campbell, and her recollections of life at Campbell then and now are invaluable in recording Campbell's story and preserving its traditions.

# DIAMOND MATTHEWS

## STEADY RIGHT HAND FOR THREE CAMPBELL PRESIDENTS

**C**ampbell Junior College put Diamond Matthews to work when she was just 17 years old. It was late in the spring semester of her first year of junior college when President Leslie Campbell offered Matthews a job in his office, based on a glowing recommendation of her English skills from her professor Mabel Powell.

That began a life of service for Matthews — over 65 years — to three Campbell presidents and hundreds of students.

She had quite a learning curve when she began working as secretary — she became so discouraged, in fact, she tried to resign three times. Each time, President Campbell would tell her to keep up the good work. Matthews worked alongside him for 23 years.

She has the distinction of being the first summa cum laude graduate after Campbell received senior college accreditation in 1965. She was also the first and longest-serving secretary to Campbell's Alumni Board of Directors, assuming that duty in 1959.

As a student, Matthews saw firsthand the many changes the school underwent after WWII changed the landscape. In her time, students received military training “just in case” of drafting or invasion. She could remember swinging on ropes and scaling fences ... and slipping and falling once or twice, too. When the veterans returned home, they played an important part in liberalizing some of the rules at Campbell. She joined them in the vanguard of those who wanted to bring dances to campus. Eventually, square dances were allowed in Carter Gym, then other more formal affairs came later — a real triumph, according to Matthews.

One of the great highlights of her career was seeing the University achieve accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Matthews spent long hours preparing materials for President Campbell to present in Atlanta, working day in and day out on the accreditation application. The night he returned from the presentation, the entire student body was waiting on the train station platform at 2 a.m. for the news that the University was accredited. Matthews, of course, celebrated with them.

She continued to work as an assistant to presidents Norman A. Wiggins and Jerry Wallace for many years after Campbell was accredited, eventually receiving the Alumni Life of Service Award for her dedication.







CAMPBELL UNIVERSITY  
GRADUATE

A. P. R. K. E. Y.

# PATRICIA CONWAY

## TRAILBLAZER WHO RETURNED TO FINISH HER CAMPBELL STORY

**P**atricia Oates Conway's first Campbell memory was in the summer of 1968, sitting outside of Norman A. Wiggins' office while her high school counselor, the Rev. Roger White, spoke to the new Campbell president about her enrollment in his school. When White walked into the waiting area where Conway sat, he looked her in the eyes and smiled.

"You're a Campbell student."

That year, she and two other students — Cordell Wise and Marquiette Lawrence — broke the color barrier, becoming the first black students in Campbell's 90-year history.

When President Wiggins asked her counselor what Conway had to offer Campbell, the reverend's response was, "A better question: What can Campbell do for her?"

She did have something to offer Campbell — her voice. A music major, Conway joined the travelling choir as a freshman and built strong friendships in the previously all-white group. She has positive memories of her concert trips and the friendships she made in her group.

But being a trailblazer didn't come without a price. She endured racial slurs and was once refused service in a restaurant because she was sharing a booth with a fellow male student who was white — the waitress thought they were a couple.

Conway didn't make it to graduation — she left after two years in 1970 for the "bright lights of Baltimore," as she put it, to find her self and start a new life.

But her Campbell story doesn't end there.

She returned to her hometown of Clinton, North Carolina, in the 80s to be near family. All three of her children grew up and went to college, and as adults, they began encouraging their mother to finish what she started and earn her degree. But it took a chance meeting with the man who introduced her to Campbell the first time — the Rev. White — to convince her to do it. "They owe you an education," he told her.

Conway earned her degree in communication studies in May 2017, finally closing the book on an important piece of Campbell University history.

# MILLIE WIGGINS

## WORKED WELL BEYOND THE TRADITIONAL ROLE OF FIRST LADY

**J**ust months before her death at the age of 97, Millie Wiggins shared the story of how she met Campbell's third president, Norman Adrian Wiggins. She went back 72 years to January 1947, the first day of spring classes at Campbell Junior College. On this freezing winter day, her class huddled around the lone radiator in her Kivett Hall classroom.

That's where she first saw Ed — she called him “Ed” because he was one of two Adrians in the class, and the other got to keep the “A” — he handsome and taller than his classmates (thus, easily noticed). “My friends told me later that he asked everyone, ‘Who is that girl?’”

Millie Wiggins would marry her Ed just a few years later, and the two would go on to earn graduate degrees at Wake Forest and later Columbia University in New York. In 1968, Norman Wiggins accepted the leadership role at Campbell, and Millie soon became matriarch to the school she grew up next to in her hometown of Coats.

From the law school and library that bears the Wiggins name to the launch of the nation's first new pharmacy school in 40 years, an ROTC program, a business school, a school of education and a divinity school — the Wiggins oversaw unprecedented growth at Campbell, even ushering its transformation from a college to a university in 1979.

For 36 years, Millie Wiggins built her own definition of the term “First Lady.” While she accepted the traditional roles of hostess and socialite, she was more at home as Norman Wiggins' partner and was seen more as an advisor. The two traveled the world together — conventions in Ireland or Great Britain; the launch of a new Campbell program in Malaysia.

The president's successor, Jerry Wallace, said Millie Wiggins also sacrificed a great deal in her role. Her husband traveled alone often or kept late hours in his office. “Millie spent a lot of time by herself,” Wallace says. “A lot of time. But she never complained. Not once.”

She continued to support Campbell after Norman Wiggins' death in 2007 and throughout the rest of her life. Their tree-shrouded house in Keith Hills remained her home for 50 years. She loved her garden and her animals; many a stray pet found a home with her over the years and she feed the wild critters daily.





# WANDA WATKINS

## COACH, MENTOR AND FRIEND FOR GENERATIONS OF ATHLETES

**G**rowing up, Wanda Watkins had the best driveway basketball court in the neighborhood — complete with a regulation goal and outdoor lighting — and everybody in the neighborhood would come over to her house to play late into the night. These were some of Watkins' best childhood memories. Basketball was her first love.

The state added 5-on-5, full court girls basketball when Watkins was in eighth grade, and she went on to become a star at South Johnston High School, which won the state title during her time there. She was offered a full scholarship to play for Coach Robert “Peanut” Doak at North Carolina State University, but Watkins wanted something N.C. State didn't offer at the time — a degree in physical education.

Campbell University did. And the rest is history.

Watkins became Campbell's first scholarship female athlete and played for Coach Betty Jo Clary. She was team captain of not only the basketball team, but the softball team as well. She was named Campbell's Outstanding Female Athlete after the 1978-79 season. She became a graduate assistant for Clary after graduation, and in 1981 when Clary decided to quit coaching to become a full-time teacher, Watkins had a crazy idea.

She asked Athletics Director Wendell Carr if he would consider a recent graduate in her early 20s with no coaching experience to take over the team. Even crazier, Carr said yes.

Over the next 35 years, Watkins would become the one constant of Fighting Camels athletics. As a coach, she posted 549 wins, 10 appearances in conference championship games and the program's lone trip to the NCAA Tournament. She is now Campbell's associate director of athletics and senior woman administrator. Watkins was inducted into the Campbell Athletics Hall of Fame in 2017 and the Big South Hall of Fame in 2019.

Her coaching philosophy: “I found that once people know how much you care, they will do anything for you. That goes back to my parents. They were great teachers of the game of life. And they stood by me. Even when I made mistakes, I still knew they loved me and supported me. I want the same thing for the kids. I'll never replace their mothers, but they are like daughters to me.”

# BORREE KWOK

## LED CAMPBELL LIBRARY SYSTEM INTO THE DIGITAL AGE

**W**hen Borree Kwok implemented the first automated library system to replace the card catalog in 1995, she took the first step toward leading Campbell University libraries into the digital age. Over the next 24 years, she would support student learning and research as dean of the library, director of institutional research, director of library services and now assistant provost for administration.

A Hong Kong native, Kwok attended Hong Kong Baptist University, working as an editorial assistant at *AsiaWeek* and teaching high school after graduation. She moved to the U.S. to attend graduate school at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she completed a Master of Science in Library Science, and then worked at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., commuting home to Chapel Hill on the weekends to be with her newborn son.

When she accepted a librarian position at Campbell in 1993, the University library had no automated library system, no online catalog, and no automated circulation. Less than a year later, all of those systems could be found on the first library website, coded by Borree herself.

It was Kwok who established the first library computer lab, installed the first library proxy server and implemented electronic reserves on campus in the late 1990s. She briefly scaled back to part time in order to homeschool her two children, returning to full time in 2008 to introduce 24-hour library access during exam weeks.

Kwok designed a library space for the University to be adopted when the library relocated from Carrie Rich Hall to the Wiggins building and oversaw the move of the library's collection to its new home. In honor of the Wiggins legacy, she created the Annual Wiggins Library Academic Symposium. Now approaching its 10th year, the symposium gives students an opportunity to present research and art and engage with each other's work.

During her tenure as dean, the library's collection grew to over 560,000 print and electronic volumes, as well as over 110,000 print and electronic serial subscriptions. As assistant provost for administration, Kwok established the Office of Academic Advising and continues to focus on supporting student academic success with every new initiative she takes on.







# MELISSA ESSARY

## VISIONARY WHO GUIDED LAW SCHOOL MOVE TO DOWNTOWN RALEIGH

**W**hen Melissa Essary first arrived in Buies Creek as dean of Campbell University's Norman A. Wiggins School of Law in 2006, she was met with her first dilemma.

The school's home in Buies Creek could no longer keep up with enrollment, and pricey renovations were sorely needed for Kivett Hall, which housed a large portion of the school. There was no better time to consider a move that proved to be quite controversial at the time.

A move to Downtown Raleigh.

The Texas native — who left her role as law professor at Baylor University to become Campbell Law's first female dean — went to work immediately, leading a task force that studied the feasibility and sense in such a move. The recommendation to move made to the Board of Trustees was unanimous, and very soon, a building was found. It was just a block and a half from the capitol building and within walking distances of several courtrooms and law firms.

When the move was announced, applications to the law school rose by 40 percent in a year where other schools saw steady declines. Despite criticism from a vocal group who didn't want to see their alma mater leave the town where it all began, Essary moved ahead. In the end, cooler heads prevailed. Essary guided Campbell Law through the most important year since its inception and remained as dean until 2012 before stepping down to return to her first love — teaching.

The move to Raleigh has been nothing short of “transformational,” says current dean and Essary's successor, J. Rich Leonard. “I always say Dean Essary was brilliant to move the law school here,” he says. “There's a vibrancy to what we can offer students now that no other law school in the state and few in the country can.”

“Her leadership and vision throughout the process was remarkable,” adds Vice President for Advancement Britt Davis. “She was the architect for this remarkably easy and successful transition.”

Essary has remained in a leadership role since stepping down as dean — she's on numerous Raleigh-based and statewide committees and boards, and she's been recognized by several organizations, especially those that focus on women in leadership and law.

# FAITHE BEAM

## MINISTER, COUNSELOR, FRIEND, LEADER AND UNITER

**H**er father was a pastor, and when she and her sisters “played church” as children, Beam was always the preacher. She studied music education at Appalachian State University, planning to teach orchestra and work in the church part-time. But soon after graduation, a phone call from Zion Baptist Church in Shelby, North Carolina secured her first job as a minister of music and education.

One of Beam’s greatest joys is walking alongside students as they discover how God is present and at work in their lives. Her confidence that there are endless opportunities to serve – no matter what barriers exist to women in ministry – supported her as she graduated with a Master of Divinity degree in 2003. With a radiant smile concordant with her name, Beam began building personal relationships on campus and encouraging students to lead purposeful lives full of meaningful service. She became campus minister in 2007.

Beam has walked, cried, stayed up all night with and laughed with countless students during her time at Campbell. She has listened to hundreds of stories over thousands of cups of coffee at the campus Starbucks or nearby Creek Coffee. Her students know her as a caring and accessible professor, and all those who engage with Campbell Spiritual Life know her as a compassionate and graceful friend.

As campus minister, Beam counsels students, plans the freshman Connections seminar, leads various ministries on campus and makes missions and outreach opportunities accessible for all students and staff. Her passion for service has introduced many new ways to lend a hand to a neighbor. Students have responded enthusiastically; when Beam first brought Inasmuch Day of Service to Campbell, registration topped 300 in the first year. More community engagement initiatives soon followed: Campbell’s Community Christmas Store, Campus Kitchen, Community Garden and Campus Pantry and Ministry House, to name a few.

Beam began Campbell traditions such as Freshman Worship in Butler Chapel, Lenten worship each spring and intentional focus on Advent each Christmas. She has guided Campbell through a shift in mission trips, sending students to the eastern seaboard and to cities across the country. No matter where they travel, Beam is committed to creating space for students to express their love for God and their neighbors. Her candor, kindness and compassion make her a blessing to the Campbell community.



A. Rocky



# JENNA CARPENTER

## FOUNDING DEAN A NATIONAL VOICE FOR WOMEN IN STEM EDUCATION

**J**enna Carpenter was a national voice for women in both STEM fields and STEM education before she ever stepped foot on campus as founding dean of Campbell University's School of Engineering in 2015. In her four years in Buies Creek, she's only built on that reputation — taking a new school and building it into one of the most inclusive and nationally recognized engineering schools in the country.

And it hasn't even graduated its first class yet.

She first stepped on the national stage (literally) in 2013, delivering a TED Talk while an associate dean at Louisiana Tech on gender bias and how it affects STEM education. She was soon named by Dreambox Learning as one of 10 "Women in STEM who Rock" in 2015, joining celebrities like Chelsea Clinton, actresses Mayim Bialik and Danica McKellar, and Yahoo! CEO Marissa Meyer.

When she became dean at Campbell, women in the U.S. accounted for only 26 percent of STEM workers, and only 13 percent of the nation's engineers were women. Carpenter's mantra was that young girls shy away from math, engineering and science early in life because of "confidence-zapping stereotypes" that those subjects are for boys, and the girls who do stick with it develop labels like "nerd" or "braniac." "They turn away from math and science at the very time in their lives when opportunities in those areas begin to open up for them."

She's made it a point to create a more welcoming and diverse atmosphere at Campbell. Her students host more than 100 Girl Scouts annually to mentor them on the engineering design process. In 2018, the school received an NSF grant to provide scholarships for low-income engineering students.

And this summer, Campbell was recognized nationally as having one of the "most inclusive" engineering schools in the nation, just weeks after becoming the 45th school in the U.S. to be named a Kern Entrepreneurial Engineering Network partner.

When the first engineering students walk the stage for their undergraduate degree in May 2020 and enter the workforce, it will mark a new era for Campbell University. And generations of future engineers will owe their success to Jenna Carpenter.