

Medallion of Merit Citation  
Presented to Sandra Combs Boyette (MBA '95)  
February 21, 2019

Today we honor an individual whose graceful leadership, extraordinary character and natural talent as a positive voice for Wake Forest define her pivotal role in the story of our University. For 35 years, from her start as a staff writer to her appointment as Wake Forest's first female vice president, this gifted communicator always found the right words to elevate and advance Wake Forest. I am pleased to recognize Sandra Combs Boyette, 2019 Medallion of Merit recipient.

A native of Winston-Salem, Ms. Boyette received her bachelor's degree from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. She began her career as a middle-school teacher and received a Master of Arts in Education degree at Converse College. Later in her career, she earned an MBA from Wake Forest.

Ms. Boyette began building a language for the Wake Forest story in 1981 as a staff writer who drafted proposals and other development communications. Her work introduced her to alumni, faculty and students, and she showed an aptitude for communicating the academically rigorous yet intimate Wake Forest culture. She was promoted to foundations director and later associate director of development.

In 1987, President Thomas Hearn created the Office of Public Relations to foster the growth of Wake Forest, then a regional institution. As the department's first director, Ms. Boyette was challenged to increase Wake Forest's capacity to reach a broader audience. Opportunity came quickly when three students approached her about bringing the 1988 presidential debate to campus. Eighteen months later, Ms. Boyette put Wake Forest in the national spotlight with the Bush Dukakis debate. More importantly to her, 700 Wake Forest students were directly involved with one of our country's most important democratic exercises.

In 1988, Ms. Boyette was appointed vice president of public affairs, the highest administrative office held by a female. In that role, she developed the public affairs office, secured a second presidential debate in 2000 and oversaw the staff of the publications program and an award-winning magazine.

When development and public relations efforts were combined in the Office of University Advancement in 1996, Ms. Boyette was named vice president of advancement. She used her talent for communications and acumen for fundraising to manage a successful Honoring the Promise campaign. In 2005, she welcomed President Nathan Hatch to the Wake Forest family with an inaugural celebration of unprecedented scale. She later served President Hatch as senior advisor.

An advocate for women in the Triad community, Ms. Boyette is a charter and former board member of the Women's Fund of Winston-Salem. She is also former chair of the local board of the YWCA. She continues to assist nonprofits through Stepstone Strategic, a consulting firm she cofounded in 2016.

In gratitude for her 35 years of modeling character-driven leadership and mentorship, advancing Wake Forest with her gift for language and elevating the role of women at Wake Forest as a pioneer who inspired self-confidence in female colleagues, Wake Forest University

confers its highest honor, the Medallion of Merit, on Sandra Combs Boyette on this Twenty-first day of February, Two Thousand Nineteen.