

DONNA ANN BOSWELL ('72, MA '74)

Today we honor an individual whose leadership has helped elevate and shape Wake Forest University and whose extraordinary vision exemplifies our institution's unique blend of tradition and innovation. She first began surmounting barriers as a Wake Forest student, achieved exceptional success in academia and the law, and inspired and empowered peers and future generations as the first woman chair of the University's Board of Trustees. I am pleased to recognize Donna Ann Boswell as the 2021 Medallion of Merit recipient.

After spending her childhood in Kansas City, Missouri, and Memphis, Tennessee, Dr. Boswell enrolled at Wake Forest in 1968. She received her bachelor's and master's degrees from Wake Forest before earning a Ph.D. at Pennsylvania State University, all in psychology. She became a professor at Wesleyan University and then earned her J.D. from the University of Pennsylvania Law School, where she was Executive Editor of the Law Review.

A gifted teacher, Dr. Boswell transitioned from instructing college students to advising legal clients on the intricacies of regulatory law. She joined the law firm Hogan & Hartson in Washington, D.C., focusing first on mobile-phone industry regulation, and then developed expertise in healthcare law, advising hospitals, academic medical centers, research companies and manufacturers on complex compliance issues.

Dr. Boswell rose to partner at her firm, and led its merger with a large, London-based counterpart to form Hogan Lovells US LLP, before retiring from the firm in 2015 and moving to Winston-Salem. She has generously shared her deep healthcare industry expertise to advance the interests of the University's medical enterprise, and served as chair of the WFU Health Sciences and WFU Baptist Medical Center boards, of which boards she remains a valued member.

Dr. Boswell's efforts to create an equitable student experience began in her earliest days at Wake Forest. As a resident advisor for the College's first residential African American students, she advocated for an inclusive environment that empowered her peers. Fifty years later, her work toward fostering a welcoming campus climate continues with her appointment as co-chair of the renaming committee initiated by the President's Commission on Race, Equity and Community. Her success in promoting community spans generations, from nurturing Strings Society friendships to connecting with current students.

Dr. Boswell's clarity of vision and her commitment to always strive for a better Wake Forest led to her groundbreaking appointment as the first woman chair of the University's Board of Trustees in 2015. She held the position for three terms and was at the helm when Wake Downtown opened its campus. Dr. Boswell has served as a Trustee since 2004, having previously served on the College Board of Visitors. She has contributed generously to Wake Forest, for scholarships, faculty support, and medical education, including a leadership gift that led to the establishment of the Donna A. Boswell Presidential Chair of Health Care Innovation.

In gratitude for her five decades of devotion to Wake Forest and its mission, for her service as a values-driven leader and role model, and for her continuing efforts to create an inclusive and equitable campus community, Wake Forest University confers its highest honor, the Medallion of Merit, upon Dr. Donna Ann Boswell on this eighteenth day of February, two thousand twenty-one.