

MEDALLION OF MERIT CITATION
Presented to Michael “Mike” Gerald Ford
February 15, 2018

Today we honor an individual whose genuine and unwavering devotion to our students and the Wake Forest community is grounded in his fundamental faith in *Pro Humanitate*. Guided by the core principle that we should invest our talents and resources to improve the world around us, his generosity and leadership have transformed campus culture and enriched the lives of generations of students. I am pleased to recognize Michael “Mike” Gerald Ford as the 2018 Medallion of Merit recipient.

Fifty years ago, Mr. Ford enrolled at Wake Forest and, in his own words, “began a love story” with a community that would shape, and in turn be shaped by him. He was quick to immerse himself in life beyond the classroom, joining student organizations and advancing through the ranks of Student Government, College Union, College Republicans and Sigma Chi fraternity.

Following graduation in 1972, Mr. Ford traveled extensively throughout the country, first as a leadership consultant for the national office of Sigma Chi, and later campaigning for his father, Gerald Ford, the 38th president of the United States. Amid the political campaigning, Mr. Ford earned a Master of Divinity degree from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. After graduation, he began his pastoral career as campus minister at the University of Pittsburgh. There he discovered his Christian calling was to serve not in a church, but on a college campus.

In 1981, Mr. Ford returned to Wake Forest as Director of Student Activities and the Student Union, embarking on a remarkable 36-year journey with his alma mater. Early in his tenure, he lobbied for a social space for students and was largely responsible for mobilizing the task force and administrative support that led to the construction of Benson University Center. His enthusiasm and ability to connect with students led to positions as Associate Dean of Students, Director of Student Development, Associate Dean of Student Life and Director of Legacy and Philanthropy Programs at the Pro Humanitate Institute.

In his mission to foster student growth and leadership development, Mr. Ford created programs and initiatives that continue to enhance the intellectual, social and spiritual growth of Wake Forest students. His work with the Brian Piccolo Cancer Research Fund Drive was fueled by signature fundraising events like Hit the Bricks and Wake ‘N Shake, and he is indelibly linked to student leadership programs like LEAD (later called CHARGE), community-service initiatives like Project Pumpkin, and pre-orientation programs like Wake World, SPARC and Deacon Camp. Although he retired from Wake Forest in 2017, Mr. Ford continues to serve the community as a trustee of the Gerald Ford Presidential Foundation and through his work for Samaritan Ministries, Young Life and First Presbyterian Church in Winston-Salem.

In gratitude for the many Wake Forest traditions he created that continue to enrich the student experience, for modeling his unique brand of values-driven leadership for our young men and

women, and for his lifelong commitment to the spirit of *Pro Humanitate*, Wake Forest University confers its highest honor, the Medallion of Merit, on Michael “Mike” Gerald Ford on this Fifteenth day of February, Two Thousand Eighteen.

Nathan O. Hatch, President
Wake Forest University