



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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UNC Board of Governors Announces Winner of the Governor James E. Holshouser, Jr. Award

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. – Dr. Billy Ogletree of Western Carolina University received the 2020 Governor James E. Holshouser, Jr. Award for Excellence in Public Service during today's regular meeting of the UNC Board of Governors.

The award honors faculty who exemplify the University's commitment to service and community engagement. Created in 2007 and renamed in 2013 to honor former governor, James E. Holshouser, Jr., the award is designed to "encourage, identify, recognize and reward public service by employees of the University."

As WCU's Catherine Brewer Smith Distinguished Professor of Communication Sciences and Disorders, Ogletree has written three influential books and published or presented nearly 100 refereed works, which have made major contributions to research in the field of severe developmental disabilities and autism.

"He specializes in augmentation and alternative communications populations—individuals with acute expressive disorders characterized by impairments in speech, language, writing, and reading, and who must rely on a combination of existing speech or vocalizations, gestures, manual signs, and aided communication. In short, Dr. Ogletree literally gives voice to those who need it most," explained WCU Chancellor Kelli R. Brown.

Over the course of 28 years at WCU, Ogletree has prioritized preparing both future and working therapists, scholars, and teachers to lead the way in supporting those with speech-language pathologies. He has secured nearly \$4 million in grant funding from the U.S. Department of Education to help support more than 175 student scholars. Having served as the head in two WCU academic departments (Human Services and Communication Sciences and Disorders), Ogletree has maintained an intentional focus on junior faculty development, mentoring countless faculty through the tenure and promotion process. Many of his publications and presentations have been co-authored with students, providing invaluable experience and networking opportunities to his mentees.

He also established the Cullowhee Conference on Communicative Disorders. Now in its 28th year, the conference is one of the state's largest providers of continuing education for speech-language pathologists, having attracted more than 4,000 attendees. The conference helps speech-language pathologists, special educators, occupational therapists, and physical therapists stay abreast of new developments in their profession, and it has generated nearly 50,000 hours of the continuing education

APPENDIX A

units these professionals need to maintain licensure. Few, if any, other initiatives have had such a pervasive and sustained impact on the professional development and learning of a field.

“Dr. Ogletree has committed himself to listening to and serving those who might otherwise go unheard. He has taught, mentored, and inspired North Carolina’s next generation of servant leaders. He is leading research that is making tangible improvements in lives and changing how we communicate. He has spearheaded initiatives that have had an unparalleled impact on the professional development of the experts working in the field,” said UNC System President Peter Hans. “As the recipient of the Holshouser award, Dr. Ogletree exemplifies the broad and durable impact UNC System teaching, research, and service activities have across this state.”

The impact of Ogletree’s expertise extends well beyond his work in classroom, libraries and conferences. Ogletree has committed more than 100,000 hours of service through direct and indirect engagement and supervisory work as a speech-language pathologist. He has worked in K-12 classrooms, special school districts, residential facilities, three university clinics (as a clinician and clinical supervisor), and a medical center (The University of Kansas, Children’s Rehabilitation Unit – a University Affiliated Program providing team-based services and training for students). Ogletree has consulted for public school programs in Louisiana, Kansas and North Carolina. He also served as a case manager in Kansas for legal cases for the US Department of Justice.

For a majority of his nearly three-decade-long career, Ogletree has focused primarily on serving the western North Carolina region and the wider state. His partnerships with organizations such as Macon County Citizens for the Handicapped (now Macon Citizens Abilities, Inc.) and the Sylva Assistive Technology Resource Center has led to tens of thousands of dollars of services, resources and expertise to serve a region that otherwise may not have had access to such resources.

Ogletree also works closely with community members and elected officials at the state, national, and international level to ensure that those with disabilities have a voice in shaping informed public policy. As chair of the National Joint Committee for the Communication Needs of Persons with Severe Disabilities, Ogletree has led efforts to establish and promote recommended practices for professionals serving individuals with severe disabilities. Among many significant accomplishments, the committee established the [Communication Bill of Rights](#). The document has established the worldwide standard of care for individuals with severe disabilities and communication challenges.

“It’s clear that Dr. Ogletree’s work for the university is something far more profound than a mere job — it’s a calling. His efforts to ensure that society hears and listens to those with communication needs embody the essence of our University,” said UNC Board of Governors Chair Randy Ramsey. “The Board of Governors is proud to recognize him for his strong commitment to research, stewardship and service.”

Ogletree will receive a \$7,500 stipend and a bronze medallion in honor of his work.

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