UNC System Announces the Passing of President Emeritus C.D. Spangler, Jr.

CHAPEL HILL – The University of North Carolina System (UNC System) announces the passing of President Emeritus C. D. Spangler, Jr.

In a statement made today, UNC System President Margaret Spellings reflected on his legacy:

“C.D. Spangler, Jr. was a great North Carolinian, and he will forever be a giant of our state. He will be remembered as a gifted business leader, a compassionate philanthropist, and above all as a public servant who answered the call of the University at a critical time in its history. He believed in the power of education to change lives and transform a state, and he made those possibilities into reality through his life’s work. The first in his family to go to college, Dick never forgot who our public universities were meant to serve. North Carolina is the prosperous, growing state that it is because of principled leaders like Dick.

My thoughts are with his wife Meredith, and his daughters Abigail and Anna. Anna continues her father’s legacy through her leadership on the Board of Governors. This state will forever be indebted and grateful that Dick dedicated his life to public service, public education, and the state he loved so much.”

UNC System President Emeritus Erskine Bowles issued the following statement:

“Our State and our University have lost a giant—a leader like no other. Fortunately for all of us the enormous good he did will live on. He was strong, forthright, thoughtful and caring. Throughout his life he never varied a degree from his true north in any decision he made or in any relationship he had. Every student who enters the University for generations to come will benefit from those deep values that guided each and every decision he made.

I was honored to be his friend and to stand on his broad shoulders.”

In addition, Wyndham Robertson, President Emeritus Spangler’s Vice President for Communications from 1986 to 1995, issued the following statement:

“As president of the UNC System, Dick Spangler fought against tuition increases, understanding that many North Carolinians can’t afford what others consider the modest cost of attending a state
university. He made the System a more comfortable place for women and minorities; he sought them out and pushed them into positions of leadership. He was a great boss. As the first female vice president of the UNC System, I had some tricky moments, but I always knew he had my back. He loved North Carolina and often said being president was the best job in the world.”

About C.D. Spangler, Jr.

Before he succeeded Friday as UNC System President in 1986, C. D. Spangler, Jr., was a successful businessman for whom public service in education had been a longtime avocation. A Charlotte native and graduate of UNC-Chapel Hill and Harvard Business School, he had served as vice-chair of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education, chaired the NC State Board of Education, and co-chaired the Governor’s Commission on Education for Economic Growth.

Throughout his 11-year tenure as UNC System President, Spangler fought to keep tuition low and was equally vocal about the University’s role as a powerful engine for the state’s economy. Under his leadership, University-wide minimum admissions requirements were implemented, a series of reforms were instituted to help ensure the integrity of all intercollegiate athletic programs, an exhaustive review of the basic academic missions of the 16 campuses was completed, and external funding for research and other sponsored programs more than tripled. Also during his tenure, the University’s annual state operating budget nearly doubled, and UNC campuses received more than $1 billion from the legislature for capital construction and renovation.

President Emeritus Spangler and the Spangler family foundation have given generously to the University over the years. Among their public gifts, they have funded and helped to complete over 120 distinguished professorships across the 16 institutions of higher education.

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