

FEATURE ARTICLE

Gateway: Sowing Seeds of Progress

The future of the Piedmont Triad region is literally changing right before our eyes. The story that's unfolding now however, is in stark contrast to how the story began. The progress that has been brought on by the presence of the region's joint Millennial Campus—a Triad-based research and technology campus—is indicative of a bright future that embraces partnerships and collaboration.

The year was 1891, and the State Normal and Industrial School (The University of North Carolina at Greensboro) was legislatively enacted on February 19th during the final decade of the nineteenth century. The school was established on the basis of educating women; mainly as teachers and nurses. Meanwhile, just a stone's throw away, the A and M College for Colored People (North Carolina A&T State University) would be ratified by the North Carolina General Assembly on March 9, 1891. Similar to other 1890, land-grant schools for people of color, the college would bring about social and economic change not only for African American people, but for the entire nation. However, for decades, the struggle for equal education and equal rights for women and minorities would continue.

Alongside the education of women at UNCG beginning in 1891, the Women's Suffrage movement was well under way not only throughout the country but throughout the world. The dreams of little girls across this nation were now a possibility, and their ideas were actually taken into consideration by parents, educators and the community at large. Former slaves and blacks were being educated because of the 1890 Morrill Act that granted land for the purpose of African American institutions of higher learning. Doors of opportunities were being opened to a generation of people that traditionally had minimal or no education. Hope, dignity, respect and progress were on the horizon for both women and African Americans.

To that end, on February 1, 1960, four North Carolina Agricultural & Technical College students sat down at a Woolworth lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, and waited for service. Despite the lack of success of previous lunch counter sit-ins, this time was different. The effectiveness of the sit-ins was due in part to the behavior of its participants—the students themselves were staging a non-violent protest. Because of the success of the protest, the sit-in movement spread to numerous other cities, and soon the very pillars of a nation were shaken; Jim Crow laws were abolished, and the changing face of our country began to emerge. NCA&T and the surrounding community entered a new realm in history, and the school was elevated to a higher, national platform.

This was the beginning of a proud and honored legacy that would endure hard trials, but would also welcome dedicated support from all people. The seeds of change and progress were sown in rich soil

and nourished by loving hands and determined minds. In the midst of the ongoing struggles of the Women's Suffrage movement and the Civil Rights era, UNC-Greensboro and N.C. A&T State University continued to grow and sprout seeds of change. Both would weather harsh social winters and devastating economic droughts to grow into mighty educational towers with the ability to change the surrounding landscape. Both would fulfill similar destinies and dare to attain what they visualized in the distance: a future filled with both educational and technological advancements that were only dreams for their founding fathers.

The time of harvest has arrived for these two great institutions: The University of North Carolina at Greensboro and North Carolina A&T State University. Both were seeds planted to produce a harvest of educational and technological knowledge that would propel a nation into the next century of research, development, and innovative problem solving.

Gateway University Research Park is the new name for the Millennial Campus and is part of the harvest of these two barrier-breaking institutions. Recognizing the power generated by leveraging the human capital and financial resources of two outstanding public institutions, NCA&T and UNCG responded to the needs of the Piedmont Triad area and state of North Carolina with a synergistic approach that would not be possible if either institution was working alone. The project also has a new board of directors, and a new 20-year, \$250 million master plan resulting from the joint collaboration between NCA&T and UNCG. When fully developed, the project will create a total economic impact of \$50 million per year within the Triad region.

As a bridge or "gateway" to the future, the branding of the name encompasses all the aspects that make the project significant for the partnering universities and the research opportunities that will be established; opportunities that the forefathers and alumnus of the past envisioned for the future.

Now, both institutions are home to numerous faculty members with expertise in the health, physical, natural, and social sciences; education, technology, engineering, business, arts and humanities. This combined expertise is distributed across many academic departments in Arts and Sciences and professional schools, and is demonstrated in basic and applied research projects, as well as through outreach provided by various clinical services and educational programs at both institutions. Combining the research talents of both faculties will foster scientific research and teaching with the potential for technology transfer and patents, for creation of new revenue-generating companies, and for services to local and state agencies. Economic development projects will typically be characterized by efforts to improve the businesses/industries of today while helping to invent the businesses/industries of tomorrow. Building on the complementary strengths of both universities, initiatives born and nurtured at the Gateway University Research Park will help strengthen the area's economy, improve community services, and enrich the quality of life. Just as change in the social and economic communities affect university or campus life, campus activities can bring about socio-economic change.

Similar to the brave new world that these two institutions' visionaries imagined, the Gateway University Research Park is in line with their hopes and dreams for future generations. Some of the fields of research will include:

- **Nanotechnology (application of science to developing new materials and processes by manipulating molecular and atomic particles)**
- Alternate and Renewable Energy (improved human and environmental health through sustainable and environmentally friendly agricultural/industrial practices; reduce environmental pollution, improve air and water quality, and promote clean and renewable energy)
- Biotechnology and Biochemistry (genetic manipulation, cellular and developmental biology, pharmacology, physiology)
- Electronics and Human Factors (electrical and software engineering, internet and computer security, data visualization and simulation, high performance computing, artificial intelligence, neural networks)
- Environmental Sciences (water quality, aquatic ecology, waste remediation, chemical hazards, pollution reduction, environmental restoration, geographic information systems, land use)
- Food and Nutrition (disease prevention, diet analyses, bone biology, mineral/vitamin absorption)
- Health Genetics (personalized medicine, health counseling, community health, and DNA Core Lab for gene sequencing and genotyping)
- Materials Science and Engineering (polymer and composites science, surface modifications)
- Social Sciences (research, study or teaching involving the systematic study of social systems, social institutions and social behavior)

Research in these fields, and others, will provide major benefits for the Triad area. For example, they provide graduates with promising careers, attract outstanding researchers, scientists and business leaders from other parts of the world, draw upon external funding from a variety of sources, and have significant potential for economic development in the Greater Greensboro Area.

Gateway University Research Park is an untapped oasis of educational and technological advancement that is the result of the collaboration between The University of North Carolina at Greensboro and North Carolina A&T State University. These two bastions of knowledge, information and resources which grew from a single seed—a solitary idea of progress that was planted long ago—now reap a harvest of social and economic development and value for the community, the state and the nation.