



Esteemed educator and engineer, Dr. Harold Martin has created a rich legacy within North Carolina and beyond.

From an early age, education was a central theme in Dr. Martin's family. Despite his parents' lack of formal education, they emphasized the importance of academic achievement and expected all three of their children to attend college. Dr. Martin's older brother and sister set the groundwork, guiding him through the early stages of his educational journey. He credits his family's dedication to education, combined with the support of exceptional teachers, for laying the foundation for his future success. Living in a community where neighbors looked out for each other provided a safe environment and fostered a sense of trust and support. This upbringing, coupled with the influential presence of extended family members, molded him into the person he is today.

"Service, community involvement, and high levels of discipline were emphasized in our household," reflects Dr. Martin.

During his formative years, Dr. Martin spent summers working on his grandparents' tobacco farm in Southern Virginia. He credits this experience for shaping his work ethic and family values. "Overall, I had a wonderful childhood filled with valuable lessons about trust, support, and community," says Dr. Martin.

Martin was influenced by several key mentors as he progressed through his education, including high school teachers and coaches who had high expectations for him. These mentors, many of whom were educated at Historically Black Colleges

and Universities (HBCUs), encouraged him to pursue higher education. Their guidance and support played a significant role in his decision to attend North Carolina A&T State University (NC A&T) and pursue a degree in engineering.

At NC A&T, Dr. Martin thrived in an environment that valued academic excellence and community engagement. Influential faculty members, including Professor Paul Gray, motivated him to seek graduate education. Dr. Martin credits Gray's mentorship for leading him to obtain a master's degree, and later a doctoral degree, in electrical engineering from Virginia Tech. These advanced degrees paved the way for Martin to return to NC A&T as a leader.

As an educator, Dr. Martin was committed to inspiring and guiding his students. His dedication to teaching and research helped NC A&T become a leading producer of African American engineers.

In 2000, Dr. Martin became the 12th chancellor of Winston-Salem State University (WSSU) where he focused on elevating the institution and positioning it as a top choice for students. He worked tirelessly to enhance academic programs and strengthen community connections, bolstering both regional and statewide economic development.

Thanks to Dr. Martin's leadership, WSSU plays a critical role in attracting businesses and creating job opportunities in the region.

During his tenure, Dr. Martin focused on integrating university resources to meet community needs, transitioning the academic culture at WSSU to one that actively addressed regional and state workforce demands. This approach involved building partnerships with local businesses, government

agencies, and other educational institutions to promote economic growth and development.

“Growing up in Winston-Salem during the heyday of manufacturing, we faced job losses due to offshore moves. My focus was on elevating institutions and positioning them for top students, academic program enhancements, and strong regional connections,” says Dr. Martin.

His efforts to align educational programs with the needs of the business community resulted in the training of teachers, health care providers, engineers, and leaders. By emphasizing the translation of research and innovation into practical solutions, Dr. Martin ensured that the university contributed to the growth and efficiency of local businesses, including farmers.

Martin was named the 12th chancellor of NC A&T in 2009, becoming the first alumnus to be selected for the role.

“We aimed to contribute to regional economic development. Our efforts helped strengthen the ecosystem, attract businesses, and create job opportunities,” says Dr. Martin.

“Institutions play a critical role in fostering growth and attracting companies like Merck, Google, and Apple to North Carolina. I am proud of our contributions to educational and economic growth in the region.”

As years passed, Dr. Martin saw an opportunity to pass the torch at NC A&T.

“After 15 years of leading the university, it was time to allow someone else to bring fresh ideas and opportunities. Typically, university presidents or chancellors serve for five to eight years, so serving for 15 years allowed me to make a significant impact,” he reflects.

Dr. Martin continues to stay involved with boards focused on economic development in the Piedmont Triad region, including

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serving on the board of directors at both the Piedmont Triad Airport Authority and the Piedmont Triad Partnership. These roles allow him to remain engaged in efforts to drive growth in the region.

Concerning the future of North Carolina and its growing business community, Dr. Martin says, “It is crucial for North Carolina to continue distinguishing itself as a leading state for business. This opens significant opportunities and doors for corporations and executives to consider North Carolina as a place to expand or grow, particularly for industries already here. We must continue shaping how North Carolina, through its university system, public and private institutions, and excellent community college system, provides educational opportunities to produce the workforce of the future.”

In addition to his professional achievements, Dr. Martin

dedicates time to mentoring young professionals, sharing strategies and best practices to help them manage crises and lead effectively. His passion for mentoring and supporting the next generation of leaders has been a significant part of his post-retirement life.

Despite his busy schedule, Dr. Martin makes time for personal interests and hobbies - improving his golf game, learning to play the guitar, and spending quality time with his family, including his two married sons and five grandchildren. He enjoys relaxing with his wife at their house in Wilmington and exploring new hobbies like woodworking.

Throughout his career and personal life, Dr. Martin’s values of discipline, hard work, and community engagement have remained constant.

His contributions to education and economic development have left an indelible mark on both the Piedmont Triad region and the state of North Carolina. As he continues to inspire and support the next generation of leaders, his legacy will undoubtedly endure for years to come.