A History of the Department of Physical Education and Recreation

The majestic, four-building L. T. Walker Physical Education and Recreation Complex, completed in 1985, and extending along the sloping hills of North Carolina Central University, symbolizes one of the pinnacles in the proud history of the department: a history that spans a half century and five chairmen.

Efforts to establish a department of physical education began around 1937 with William F. Burghart and John B. McLendon. Initially, a minor in physical education was developed, and in 1943 the first major program was instituted.

Some of the first students to receive undergraduate degrees from the department were Lou Suitt Barnes, Floyd H. Brown, Althea Godley, and Jean Henderson.

In 1948 the foundation was laid for a graduate program in physical education, and in 1951 Haywood A. Allen and James E. Wynn, both undergraduates of NCC (then North Carolina College) became the first to receive Master of Science degrees in physical education.

With the departure of Burghart, McLendon sought and secured the teaching services of two of the most outstanding physical educators in the country, Dr. Jesse Feiring Williams and Dr. Jay B. Nash, both of whom were on the faculty at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. However, McLendon's staff nucleus consisted of Dr. LeRoy T. Walker and Dr. James W. Younge, and two graduate professors, Dr. Ross E. Townes and Dr. Raymond Hopson.

Other staff members hired included Virginia Brooks, the first female swimming instructor; Alaveta Hudson, a former member of the Katherine Dunham Dance Group, who formed the first NCCU Dance Group; Tommie Tinsley Plummer; James Stevens; Floyd H. Brown, and a young woman recruited from Morris Brown College in Atlanta, Willia Woods Lewis.

Having the only swimming facility on a black campus in the area, the department provided the only formal aquatic instruction for blacks. Faced with increased demands and inadequate facilities, McLendon designed McDougald Gymnasium which upon its completion in 1950, was considered one of the finest facilities of its kind in the southeast.

McLendon left the college in 1952 and continued a distinguished career in coaching semi-pro and professional basketball teams. He was replaced by Dr. Allen E. Weatherford from the sociology department as acting chairman from 1951 until being permanently designated chairman in 1962. He continued in this post until his death in 1965.

During Dr. Weatherford's tenure, significant strides were made in the department's personnel, programs and student enrollment, graduate and undergraduate. Most noted of his accomplishments was the development of the graduate departments in both physical education and recreation. To augment the schedule of classes, Dr. Carl Blyth and Dr. Douglas Sessoms, from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, were called upon to serve the department on a part-time basis.

Full-time staff members added during his administration included Maude Perry, Jennie Taylor, Dr. Lavonia Allison, George L. Quiett, Klyda Mahoney, Dr. James Blue, Sandra T. Shuler, Savannah McKelpin, Robert Heard and Elijah Johnson.

Dr. Weatherford enhanced the already growing regional and national recognition of the University and the department through his scholarly research and his memberships honored by some of the most renowned organizations of his academic discipline.

He contributed many articles and syllabus materials, most of which were published in reputable journals, and shared joint authorship of several books. The seventeen years of Dr. Weatherford's tenure at the institution and as chairman corresponded with the years of the college's most rapid growth. "A man of great enthusiasm and high standards of professionalism," was the tribute paid to Dr. LeRoy T. Walker in the May 1972 issue of the Journal of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. These attributes, combined with Dr. Walker's remarkable foresight, characterize his eight year tenure as chairman.

The beginning of Dr. Walker's term in 1965 came at a critical juncture in the history of the profession. Earlier, he, along with Dr. Delbert Oberteuffer, Dr. Roscoe Brown, and Dr. Charles D. Henry, led a concerted national effort to remove the "white only" clause from state association in the professions. Their actions led to the 1965 Representative Assembly of the American Alliance for Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (AAHPERD) adopting a resolution at the Dallas Convention urging
all state associations to accept members regardless of race after June 30, 1996. In 1972, Dr. Walker chaired the Committee to extend Professional Services to Ethnic Minorities.

As a result of Dr. Walker's involvement at the state and national levels, the department benefitted from firsthand knowledge of trends and directions. Initial stages of implementations were often underway before the information was generally known. Movement education was added to the curriculum and an emphasis on special physical education was begun in the department before becoming general courses throughout the country.

Dr. Walker increased the opportunity for practicum experience threefold with the addition of physical education 301 and 401. Students were certified in grades K-12, but it was not until the introduction of these supervision and practice courses that they had the opportunity to do practicum work in the elementary schools, in addition to student teach during their senior year.

Parallel to the national trend in 1972, emphasis was shifted in the recreation curriculum to increase the career options of the recreation majors. Dr. Walker added ten new courses ranging from Problems in the Inner City (211) to Therapeutic Recreation (312) and Field Work (462), which enabled the students to pursue careers in recreation administration, special programs, and therapeutic recreation.

Throughout his chairmanship, Dr. Walker's overriding emphasis was on the professionalization of the majors to process, along with curriculum planning to increase knowledge socialization. He encouraged students to attend professional meetings at every level. Certificates of 100% attendance were awarded to the majors at two NCAHPERD Conventions and in Houston in the 1960's; North Carolina Central University was recognized for having the largest student delegation present for that National Convention.

It was during his administration that intramurals under the direction of Robert Bowles flourished, with campus-wide participation at a level never again achieved. All classes in the department became coed long before Title IX of 1972. It was during his administration that physical education requirements were being eliminated on campuses. But Dr. Walker was instrumental in instituting a requirement option in the General Education Program of two physical education courses and one health course, or one physical education course and two health courses. He offered more lifetime sports. Additionally, he increased the theoretical content of the courses, thereby increasing the credit hours.

Students on projected growth and current program needs and trends confirmed the need for a new facility during his administration. Subsequently, ground work was begun and plans were submitted. Negotiations with the Catholic Church for acquisition of land spanned fifteen years during which time secondary sites were chosen. However, the facility was removed from priority four times in preference of the law building, communications building, criminal justice building, and health-science building, before becoming a reality in 1982.

In relation to combining his professional and civic responsibilities and involvement with the chairmanship of the department, Dr. Walker always espoused that, "The essence of a good chairman or leader is how well the staff performs during his or her absence." Dr. James W. Younge, a senior professor in the department and athletic director was appointed by the Chancellor as acting head of the department for the 1967-68 school year during Dr. Walker's service with the Peace Corps. Dr. Younge had the monumental task of guiding preparation for the accreditation visit by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools for the upcoming year. Mr. James Stevens, assistant to the chairman, handled affairs of the department on other occasions. Added to his very able staff were Mr. Robert Bowles, Dr. Robert H. Jackson, Mr. Jerome D. McLaurin, Ms. Nancy D. Pinckney, Mr. Harry J. Edmonds, Mr. Willie S. Smith, and the first minority in the department, Dr. Mickie R. McCormick.

Being a gifted and popular speaker, Dr. Walker has continually brought recognition to the department and North Carolina Central University with his numerous speaking appearances throughout the nation. His list of awards and achievements has brought honor to the department and to the institution in an unprecedented manner. The list includes President of NCAHPERD, President of the American Alliance; Coach of the Olympic Track and Field Teams of the United States, Israel and Ethiopia; Member of the President's Council on Physical Fitness; Executive Board Member of the United States Olympic Team; President of the National Association for Intercollegiate Athletics; President of Track Athletic Congress; and Visiting Professor at the United States Military Academy as well as recipient of Kiwanis International Distinguished Service Award, Oliver Max Gardner award given by the Board of Governors for outstanding service to mankind, AAHPERD's Honor Award for meritorious service, and its highest award, the Luther H. Gulick Medal for long and distinguished service. He serves as chairman of the board for the 1987 Olympic Sports Festival. From 1983 until 1986 he was at the helm as Chancellor here at North Carolina Central University.

Dr. Walker contributed to the literature of the profession by authoring two textbooks, A Manual for the Exceptional Student and Championship Techniques in Track and Field.
His work, as a result of his versatility as a professor, coach, leader, speaker, author and television commentator, has brought more national and international distinction to the University than the endeavors of any other person in the history of the school.

The department changed hands again in September 1973 with Dr. Ross E. Townes moving to the chairmanship. With most of the professional curricula in place, Dr. Townes continued to focus his attention on the graduate program. He devoted a great deal of time and energy to the preparation of undergraduates for graduate studies whether pursued at North Carolina Central University or another institution in the country. Nineteen students, most of whom he advised, received master’s degrees during his chairmanship.

Also during his administration, the department set up an in-service program for special physical education which was funded with a government grant. Dr. Townes' adopted creed which he often shared with his students was: "Build today then strong and sure with a firm and ample base, and ascending and secure shall tomorrow find its place."

Dr. Townes had regularly contributed to the literature in the profession through his scholarly research published in the Research Quarterly and other professional journals. Over the years he has presented papers on such topics as physical fitness and aging at seminars throughout the country.

The following personnel were added during Dr. Townes' administration: Dr. Ronald Brown, Mr. George Kee, Mr. Jesse Clements, Dr. Theodore Manly, Dr. Joanne Rowe, Dr. Vernon Bond, Mr. James E. Carter, Ms. Janice James as secretary, and Mr. Vernon Bradley as a full-time equipment and supply manager.

In 1985 Dr. Townes was accorded the status of the first Professor Emeritus of the Department. Upon Dr. Townes' retirement in 1980, Dr. Carey Hughley, became head of the department. The following personnel were added during Dr. Hughley's administration: Dr. Virginia Politano, Ms. Scarlette Jones, Dr. Pete Holman, Mr. William "Red" Jackson, Mr. Ralph Wenzel, Dr. Arcelia Jeffreys, Dr. Jesse Mann and Dr. Shirley Harper. Dr. Hughley has written several articles.

Administrative leadership of the department passed from Dr. Ross Townes to Dr. Carey Hughley, Jr. in August 1980, in the beginning of a period characterized by change and/or transition. The American society has started to move into the information age, the integration of schools was in full swing, and the university leadership experienced rapid transition from Albert Whiting, to LeRoy Walker, to Tyronza Richmond to Julius Chambers.

Within the first two years of Hughley’s leadership the National Council for accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and State Approved Teacher Education Accreditations were reaffirmed. In addition, the University had recently completed a Non-Traditional Self-study focusing on long range planning to reaffirm its accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Consequently, the department developed long range plans which focused on reestablishing federal funding to support the adapted Physical Education Masters Program, seeking accreditation of the Recreation Program by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA & AALR), increasing the department's involvement with the Durham Community, and increasing enrollment in both the physical education and recreation programs. A careful staffing plan was put into place to accomplish the long range plans.

After the retirement of Ross Townes, Virginia Politano was recruited to head the Adapted Physical Education Program. Through her efforts federal funding for the program was reestablished.

Ms. Bertha Cato was recruited to replace Dr. Theodore A. Manly and to lead the recreation program to accreditation. She remained only one year. Ms. Cynthia McAfee and Ms. Scarlette Jones provided leadership in recreation for short periods. Dr. Pete Holman later took on the task of leading the department to NRPA accreditation without success.

Dr. Jesse Mann and Dr. Shirley Harper were later added to the Recreation faculty and worked untiringly to put the recreation program in position to be accredited. In Dr. Hughley's final year as chairperson, 1994, the department was given funding and authorization to apply for accreditation by NRPA. Hughley had lobbied for a National Athletic Trainer Association (NATA) certified athletic trainer position but was unable to sale support for the idea. However, Mr. William "Red" Jackson was contracted as an assistant football coach and athletic trainer, American Athletic Training Association (AATA) certified. It was not until 1993 when Mr. Jeff Lahr, NATA certified was employed in a combination athletic/physical education position that the first course sequence and laboratory experiences designed to qualify students to take the NATA Certification Examination were put in place.

Two years after the Department moved into the new Walker Complex, Dr. Willie Shaw was employed to revitalize the intramural and recreation sports program. He left after three years and Mr. Samuel Vaughan, an alumnus, of the university
returned to manage recreation and intramural sports. Mr. Ralph Wenzel and Ms. Jacqueline Pinnix were others employed as teacher-coaches during Dr. Hughley's tenure.

The LeRoy T. Walker Physical Education and Recreation Complex

Priority funding for the construction of the $10 million L. T. Walker Physical Education and Recreation Complex had been sought and granted to the department prior to 1980; however, the planning and construction process was led by Dr. Hughley and took place between 1980 and 1985. Emphasis was placed upon designing a multi-purpose facility suitable for physical education instruction and student recreation.

At the time the structure's design was "state-of-the-art" and included the first and only 50 meter swimming pool in Durham, NC. Hyatt Hammond and Associates, Inc. Along with W. Edward Jenkins, AIA both of Greensboro, NC were Architects on the project. The new facility helps to stimulate the department's enrollment. It also became a community resource, as age group and high school competitive swimming was conducted in the pool, community gymnastics programs used the gymnastic gym, North Carolina Volleyball used the main gym and parts of at least two State Games were conducted in the facility. The facility and the university were showcased in 1987 when North Carolina Amateur Sports won the bid to host the Olympic Sports Festival in the Triangle area. Wrestling and Synchronized swimming were conducted in the facility. The Synchronized Swimming National Championships were conducted in 1989.

In the mid-1980s, young adults displayed a declining interest in teaching and educational reforms pushed for providing all teachers with some grounding in an "academic discipline." As a result, the General Administration of the University of North Carolina required all education majors in areas that were not considered traditional academic disciplines to have a second concentration. This contributed to a decline in the departments' enrollment and spurred interest in developing non-teaching concentrations in physical education. Athletic training was among the first and the Curriculum Committee developed the initial plans for sport science and added a coaching minor.

The scope of a chair's responsibilities includes management of programs, facilities, and personnel. Fortunately, the period, 1980 to 1995, afforded the chair and faculty of this department the opportunity to: plan, occupy and develop policies and procedures for a new facility; develop a staffing plan to execute a smooth transition in faculty during a period when several outstanding physical educators retired from the department and set in motion plans for a transition in department program offerings from teacher certification to a variety of non-teaching options Among them were Dr. LeRoy Walker, Dr. Ross Townes, Dr. James Younge Mrs. Willia Lewis, Dr. Theodore Manly, Dr. James Blue, Coach George Quiett, and Mr. William Jackson.

Dr. Hughley has contributed to his profession's body of knowledge with publications in the Journal of Physical Education and Recreation, the Virginia Journal of Physical Education and Recreation, the North Carolina Journal of Physical Education and Recreation, and Symposium Papers of AAHPERD. He has also made presentations at the Virginia
Alliance of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance, the American Alliance of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance and the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology.

Hughley served as both chairpersons to the Department of Physical Education and Recreation and Athletic Director during his final three years. He continues to teach courses in the management of physical activity, fitness and sports programs, curriculum and swimming.

Dr. Virginia Politano, the first female chair, began as interim chair in 1994 after Dr. Hughley resigned to become the Athletic Director. Dr. Politano led the department through an intensive program review and the department maintained its program in Physical Education with tracks in Physical Education and Recreation.

During the 1998-1999 school year Ms. Mary Ubinger was added to the faculty as the Director of the Athletic Training Education Program and Ms. Dawn Maffucci was hired as the Clinical Coordinator through use of Title III funds. Both individuals taught in the program. She began the process of the self-study for the Athletic Training Education Program. However, Ms. Ubinger left before the self-study was completed and Ms. Maffucci was hired as the Director and Ms. Jewell was hired as the Clinical Supervisor using Title III funds. In 2002 Ms. Jewell was moved to state funds.

Dr. Politano obtained another Title III grant to purchase equipment for the Athletic Training Education Program. The Athletic Training Education Program was accredited in 2005, the only Historically Black College or University in the United States to be an accredited program.

Dr. Politano received a Title III grant in 1997 to purchase fitness equipment to develop a Wellness Center. The Wellness Center is used by the fitness classes, campus recreation and athletics. Another $95,000 was obtained in 2005 to purchase additional equipment.

The Recreation Program was accredited in 1998, the first HBCU in the state of North Carolina. The Physical Education Teacher Education Program was accredited in 1997. In 1999, Dr. Politano was instrumental in bringing the International Special Olympics to North Carolina Central University.

Dr. Politano has contributed to her profession through membership in state and national organizations, being an active member of the state and district organizations holding office in adapted physical education and as president of the North Carolina Alliance of Athletics, Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (NCAAHPERD). Dr. Politano has had several articles published in journals such as Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly, North Carolina Journal of Physical Education and Recreation, New Jersey Journal, and the Maryland Journal. She has also written a textbook used in the Fitness classes, edited several journal articles, completed 2 book reviews and has made presentations at the state, district and national levels.

While serving as Chair, Dr. Politano received several awards, among which was the University Physical Education of the Year by the NCAAHPERD. Dr. Politano also received a teaching award from North Carolina Central University.

In 2004, Dr. Politano’s term as chair came to an end. She continues to teach courses (both graduate and undergraduate) in the department in the areas of motor learning, motor development, adapted physical education, event management and internship for the concentrations of exercise sport science and fitness and wellness management.

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Dr. Beverly J. Allen was appointed as chair of the department in 2004 and served through 2009. She was the second female to hold the position. During her tenure, the Athletic Training Education Program (led by Dr. Virginia Politano and Ms. Dawn Maffucci) received national accreditation by the Joint Review Committee on Education in Athletic Training (JRC-AT), the Physical Education Licensure program (led by Dr. Arcelia Jeffreys) was reaffirmed by the National Council for Teacher Education (NCATE) and the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI). The Recreation program (led by Dr. Robert Stiefvater) received reaffirmation of accreditation by the Council on Accreditation of National Recreation and Park Association.

Dr. Allen was actively involved in the profession on the local state, national and international levels, serving as an officer, committee and commission member. She has published three books, journal articles and a variety of other publications and
scherly writings. The following tenure track faculty were appointed during her tenure: Dr. Lei Guo (Recreation), Dr. Hsin-Yi Liu (Exercise Physiology), and Dr. Andrea Woodson-Smith (Adapted Physical Education). Non-tenure track faculty includes Dr. Leon Mohan (Recreation), Ms. Carla Stoddard (Athletic Training), Mr. Sean Thomas (Athletic Training) and Mr. Henry White (Physical Education). Ms. Rosalind C. Richardson was appointed as Administrative Support Associate.

The vision of the Department of Physical Education and Recreation is to create a student centered educational environment that will focus on enriching and expanding the student’s short and long term views and attitudes toward physical activity.

Prepared by Beverly Allen, Ph.D. and Virginia Politano, Ph.D.
Sources: Department Records
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