Interim Chancellor LeRoy T. Walker sought to hire an Assistant to the Chancellor, a senior administrative officer of North Carolina Central University, who was licensed in North Carolina as an attorney-at-law to provide internal legal counsel to the various constituencies of North Carolina Central University. Acie L. Ward assumed that position on June 14, 1984. To assist in executing the duties of her office, Attorney Ward brought previous experiences, such as the first Assistant Dean for the Evening Program in the School of Law of North Carolina Central University; the first African-American District Court Judge in Wake County, North Carolina; as an administrative Procedures Officer for the North Carolina Department of Human Resources; an Assistant Attorney General for the North Carolina Department of Justice, the Consumer Protection Law Section; and a former Chemist for Shell Oil Company. The assistant to the chancellor provided services to all units of the university including the Chancellor, the Vice Chancellors for Academic Affairs, Financial Affairs, Development, and Student Affairs. The various duties of this position clearly demonstrated the value of these services to the University. This assistant served four (4) chancellors during her tenure: Chancellor LeRoy T. Walker, Chancellor Tyronza R. Richmond, Interim Chancellor Donna Benson, and Chancellor Julius L. Chambers.

In 1986, at the beginning of his tenure as chancellor, Chancellor Richmond changed the title of this position to Assistant to the Chancellor for Legal Affairs to insure that all internal legal matters were reviewed by this Senior Administrative Officer. The Office then was called the Office of Legal Affairs. This office also managed all of the search procedures for the hiring of senior administrators to serve in Chancellor Richmond’s cabinet. The various academic and student procedures of the university were monitored and revised during Chancellor Richmond’s term in office. Although Interim-Chancellor Benson’s term progressed for only a portion of the 1992-1993 academic year, she continued the projects that previous chancellors had commenced and began new projects, especially the planning of the New Education building, the current H. M. Michaux Education building.

The Office of Legal Affairs, as well as the previous assistant to the chancellor, served as the principal liaison between the university’s constituencies and the Attorney General’s Office which, by statute, has primary responsibility for representing the university in all legal matters. Thus, the university sought legal advice, guidance, and counsel from the Attorney General’s office as well as from the Office of the Vice President for Legal Affairs of the University of North Carolina System.

The Office of Legal Affairs continued to carry out its responsibility during Chancellor Chambers’ tenure, commencing in January 1993. In August 1993, Chancellor Chambers hired Attorney Kaye R. Webb to serve as Assistant to the Chancellor for Legal Affairs. This assistant to the chancellor brought previous experience as Executive Assistant to the Chancellor for Legal Affairs for Fayetteville State University and as Assistant Attorney General of the North Carolina Department of Justice, the Education Law Section.

In 2009 Chancellor Charlie Nelms hired Attorney Melissa Jackson to serve as Assistant to the Chancellor for Legal Affairs and to manage the Office of Legal Affairs. Prior to her arrival at NCCU, Attorney Jackson served as General Counsel at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay. She continues the services provided by previous legal assistants and updates processes and procedures of the university.

The Office of Legal Affairs and its precursor office have had three (3) attorneys from 1984 through 2009. The office has met its responsibilities during the tenures of six (6) chancellors: Chancellor LeRoy T. Walker, Chancellor Tyronza Richmond, Interim Chancellor Donna Benson, Chancellor Julius L. Chambers, Chancellor James Ammons and Chancellor Charlie Nelms.

Prepared by Acie Ward, J.D.
Sources: Department Records
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