

The Legacy of William A. Meehan 1968 - 2015





After 16 years at the helm of Jacksonville State University, Dr. William A. Meehan announced his retirement effective July 1, 2015.

Board Chairman Jim Bennett made the announcement at the end of the regular quarterly meeting in July 2014 at the Houston Cole Library.

"I have the unpleasant duty of announcing that Dr. Meehan has announced his retirement effective July 1, 2015," Bennett said.

"For 16 years, he's been an outstanding president. He's been part of this university community for over 40 years. Your footprint will always be here, Dr. Meehan, there's no doubt about that. We will begin a search for a successor and it will be a very diligent and well thought out effort. Thank you for your great service and we wish you well in whatever the future brings."

Dr. Meehan thanked the board for their support through the years.

"I'm a Gamecock and always have been," he said. "Now I'll just change back to the alumni role again, but I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and this board of trustees for the honor of serving as your president. It's been a delight. This board is always unified and always has the best interest of the university, the students, faculty and staff in mind. I could not have been more blessed by God than to have had this opportunity and I thank you very much. We've still got one more year and a lot of good things to look forward to in that year."

What does Dr. Meehan envision for his last year in office?

"As Robert Frost said, we have miles to go before we sleep. We've got new programs being developed, an exciting year of Gamecock Athletics ahead, SACSCOC reaffirmation in December, and continuation of the capital campaign. Beth, Will, Drew, Carol Grace and I are looking forward to our 16th year as first family."

After retirement what is next?

With a wink at the First Lady, he replies.

"I'm sure Mrs. Meehan will tell me."

The Legacy of William A. Meehan: 1968 - 2015

The Journey of the 11th President of Jacksonville State University

The Meehan Legacy is produced by Jacksonville State University's Office of Marketing and Communications. All materials produced are protected under copyright law and may not be reproduced without the consent of the Office of Marketing and Communications.

The Legacy of William A. Meehan

1968 - 2015



Dr. William A. Meehan, the 11th president to serve Jacksonville State University, will retire on July 1, 2015 having held the third longest presidency in the history of the university. The alumnus first set foot on campus as a freshman in 1968 and fell in love with the institution. He has since dedicated 47 years of his life to JSU - 40 as an employee. Through his warmth, compassion and student-first mentality, Dr. Meehan has been the living embodiment of JSU's motto, "The friendliest campus in the South." He has made a tremendous impact on the university over his 16 years in Bibb Graves Hall and will be greatly missed. The faculty, staff and students of Jacksonville State University would like to thank Dr. Meehan for his dedication to the university and wish him the happiest of retirements. We love you!

Meehan Timeline

1968 - William A. Meehan set foot on JSU's campus as a student

1972 - Graduated from JSU with a B.A. in biology

1972-74 - Taught high school biology and earth science

1976 - Earned an M.S. in biology from JSU

1977 - Became a JSU biology instructor

1977-79 - Served as coordinator of medical technology at JSU

1979-82 - Worked as director of academic advisement at JSU

1984-85 - Received Faculty Research and Service Award

1982-88 - Served as assistant to the vice president for academic affairs for JSU

1987 & 1999 - Received Most Outstanding Student in Administration of Higher Education Award, College of Education, University of Alabama

1992 - Married JSU alumna Beth Stevens

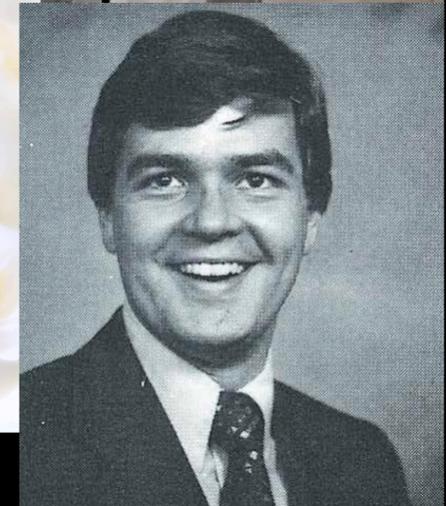
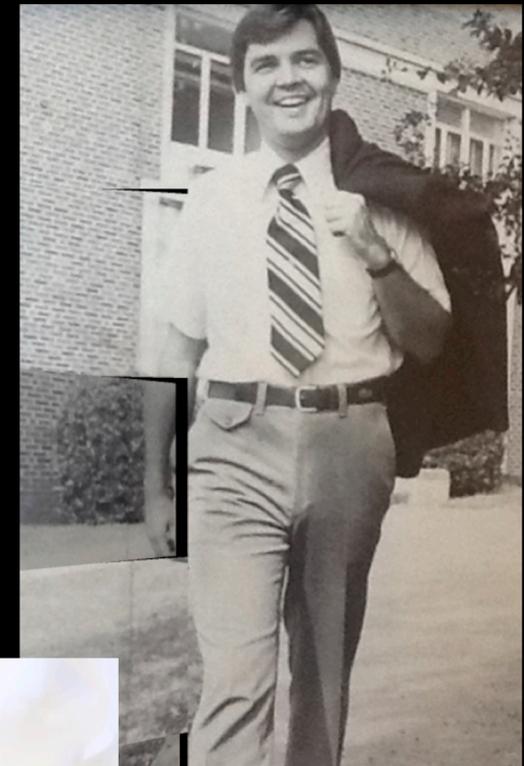
1992-93 - Served as JSU's acting vice president for academic affairs

1988-98 - Associate vice president for academic and student affairs at JSU

1998-99 - Acting vice president for institutional advancement

1999 - Earned a Doctorate of Education from the University of Alabama

1999 - Named the 11th president of JSU





2000 - Received Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce's W. Roy Crow Leadership Award and the Association of Public Safety Communication Officials' Outstanding Achievement Award

2002 - Presented the Boys and Girls Club's Eagle Award for Outstanding Community Service

2003 - Received the Silver Beaver Award from the Greater Alabama Council of the Boy Scouts of America

2005 - Named Educator of the Year by the Calhoun County Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities and received the Open Door Award from the National Alliance on Mental Illness

2007 - Named Citizen of the Year by the Anniston Star

2008 - Presented the Distinguished Citizen Award from the Boys Scouts of America Choccolocco District

2012 - Named National Alumnus of the Year for the Delta Chi Fraternity

2015 - Retires as president of JSU





The Legacy of William Meehan: Student Days

By Heather Greene

William Arthur Meehan's 47-year history with Jacksonville State University began in 1968, when he first stepped on campus as a freshman and "fell in love with the institution."

It was an exciting time to be a Gamecock. Just two years prior to his arrival, JSU had transitioned from college to university status, and in 1967, the Alabama Legislature established an independent Board of Trustees for the university, divesting jurisdiction from the State Board of Education. Little did the new board know that one of the most influential figures in the history of the university was about to enroll as an undergraduate.

Meehan came to the university during the era of many "greats" in JSU history. Houston Cole was president and Theron E. Montgomery was dean of the university. The 1969 Board of Trustees was comprised of Paul Carpenter, Frieda Coggins, Houston Cole, Mrs. C.T. Fitzpatrick, Dwayne Luce, Pete Mathews, Hugh Merrill, Madge Poole, Ernest Stone, James Thorton and Col. C.W. Dauge, Jr.

"My distinct memory is that of how much the faculty and staff cared about students," stated Meehan. "The Calverts, Lovetts and other faculty regularly took students out to eat or had them as guests in their homes. The environment has always been student friendly."



Left and Below: Meehan in his ROTC uniform in 1968.



Top: Young Meehan in his student days.



Right: Meehan and his horse Rosie.

While he would one day become the university's top administrator, Meehan had the same interests as any college student. He joined the Delta Chi fraternity, which had just been founded a year prior to his arrival, and enjoyed student life. During the spring of 1968, the legendary Ray Charles performed on campus. In 1971, the Allman Brothers entertained students with a concert. Television legend George Lindsey even attended a JSU game in 1972. While Meehan just missed Ray Charles, as he became a freshman that fall, he does remember the Allman Brothers coming to campus.

Today, Meehan is amazed as he reflects on the mass influx of technology into the classroom since his days as a student. He can remember when research papers were written in Turabian style and carbon paper was widely used for copying classroom materials.

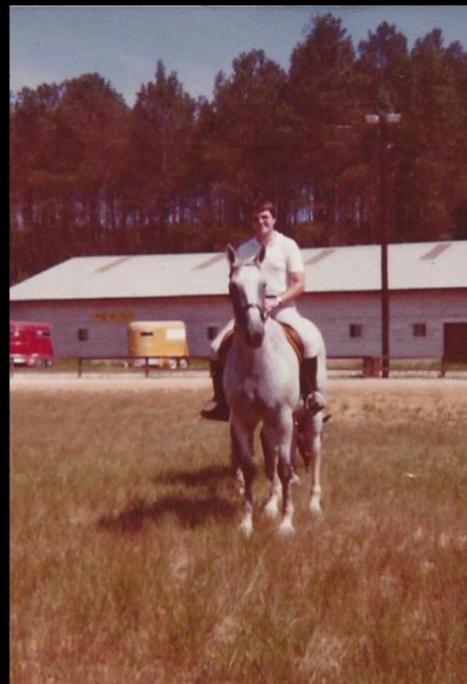
"We weren't even allowed to carry calculators to class, if you had them," recalled Meehan. "They were brand new. We had slide rules and occasionally you couldn't even bring your slide rule to class."

By all accounts, Meehan was a great student, well liked by his classmates and professors. Donald "Don" Braxton Martin ('71), a Delta Chi and former classmate and fraternity brother of Meehan, said the president always stood out.

"I have heard it said about Bill Clinton, and most recently Garth Brooks, that they would look you in the eye and make you feel like you are the only person in the room and the most important person in the world - even if just for a moment," Martin said. "Bill Meehan has that talent. He rose to the highest position you can achieve at Jacksonville State University, as president, and he did it without ever closing his door, without ever forgetting his friends and fraternity brothers. In fact, the higher he rose, the closer he wanted his friends. I am proud to have had the privilege to call Bill Meehan, 'classmate,' 'fraternity brother,' 'president,' but most of all, 'friend.' "

After completing his Bachelor of Science in biology in 1972, Meehan returned for his master's degree in the same field and worked as a graduate assistant in the Office of Admissions. "I had great mentorship here with the faculty in the biology department and other administrators," he said.

Looking back on his student days, Meehan said he is impressed by the current generation. "What I like most about seeing our students today - and I say this at every graduation speech - is that they are much more service-oriented than previous generations of students. They are willing to reach out and want to do more volunteer work. I see a lot of altruism in our students today, and I'm very proud of that."



Top Left: Young Meehan in his ROTC uniform.

Top Right: Meehan with his parents on his graduation day.

Above: Alabama Gov. George Wallace (seated) hands JSU president Houston Cole the pen used to sign documents changing the school from Jacksonville State College to Jacksonville State University in 1967.

Far Left: Meehan in his ROTC uniform.

Middle: Meehan horseback riding.

Immediate Left: Cocky (1967)



The Legacy of William Meehan: Beloved Teacher and Advisor

By Heather Greene

Upon graduating from Jacksonville State University in 1976 with his Master of Science degree in biology, Dr. William A. Meehan found himself at a career crossroads.

"Quite frankly, the opportunity that Dr. Montgomery and, at that time, Dr. Landers, the head of the department, offered me to come and teach was just too exciting," Meehan said. "That was just too much fun... You always think of how nice it would be to teach at your alma mater, or even your high school, and to be able to come back and do that at my university was very, very special. I had no idea I would be president and have that opportunity."

So in January 1977, Meehan's early career with Jacksonville State University began in a humble classroom teaching human anatomy and general biology classes, which he taught both on and off campus.

On the differences between teaching high school and college, Meehan said, "I enjoyed both of them - two different levels of teaching, but both were very enjoyable. Education is fun when you watch the light bulbs come on in students when they 'get it' - whatever the subject matter you are teaching - when they understand it. It is exciting and very rewarding for teachers to watch that engagement."



Above: Dr. Meehan, Dr. Theron Montgomery, and Mrs. Meehan at a JSU staff awards luncheon during the Meehan administration.



Above: Dr. Harold McGee, Dr. Theron Montgomery, Pete Mathews, and Dr. Meehan at the ribbon cutting of the Theron Montgomery Building.

Meehan's positive impact upon students has been demonstrated throughout the 38 years he has been employed at JSU, as countless students count him as a mentor during their academic careers.

Having taught biology and earth science for three years at a small private school in Vestavia - Christian Heritage School - between earning his undergraduate and graduate degrees, Meehan could return to high school teaching. He was offered two additional job opportunities: working on eukemia research at Children's Hospital in Birmingham or working in the health department in Mobile County.

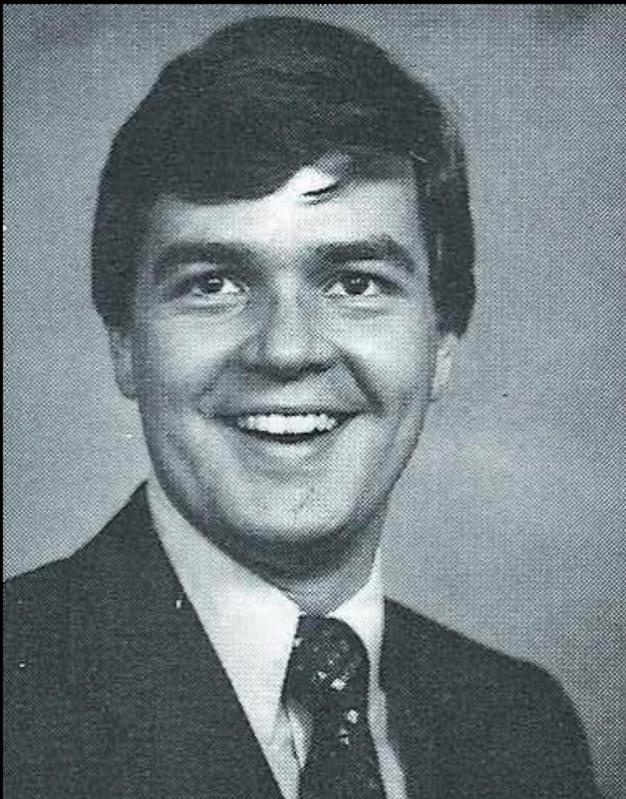
"At that time, the survival rate for children with leukemia was very low," Meehan said. "It was less than 50 percent - it is almost in the 90 percentile now. I knew I would get attached to the children working there. That would be very difficult for me. Mobile is very attractive and I had some good friends who are JSU graduates who were in the health department down there.

He was then approached by Dr. Theron Montgomery, future JSU president and Chief Academic Advisor at the time, who asked him to become a full-time JSU instructor. Meehan chose the path that would, unbeknownst to him, one day lead him to the highest position at the university.

Christa Davis, who had Dr. Meehan as her advisor when she was a student, said, "Early in my college career, I struggled with studying and making decent grades in my classes. I became discouraged as I questioned if I should continue. Dr. Meehan was 'Mr. Meehan' during my time at JSU in the early 80s, and he was assigned as my new advisor. I didn't know what to expect and was filled with so much doubt, but the moment I walked into his office, I immediately felt welcomed. I shared my concerns as he listened intently. His demeanor was sincere and compassionate. He encouraged me to stay in college and also shared some study habits that really helped. After meeting with him, my grades improved greatly and so did my self-confidence. Dr. Meehan offered sound advice, but mostly I was impressed by his listening skills and his innate visionary ability, which truly gave me hope. I began believing I could accomplish my goals and earn my degree. He truly turned my life around."



Above: Christa "Chris" Davis and Dr. Meehan on her first day of work in University Development on January 12, 2015, which actually happened to also be Dr. Theron Montgomery's 90th birthday.



Above: Meehan during his faculty days.

Davis graduated from JSU in 1986 and kept in touch with Dr. Meehan over the years, updating him on her career successes and congratulating him on his. She returned to JSU to become a development officer representing JSU's College of Arts and Sciences in University Development.

"Dr. Meehan is JSU," explained Davis. "His representation is impeccable because he is approachable to everyone, everywhere, at any time. He is genuine. Thirty years ago, I would never have dreamt to give back to my alma mater as a JSU representative, much less a graduate. Dr. Meehan made it possible, and I'm all the more blessed to have had him as my advisor and continued mentor throughout my professional career."

It goes without saying, but education and teaching are very dear to Meehan's heart, and he continued to teach in some capacity until the day he became president in 1999. Even as an administrator prior to the presidency, Meehan continued to teach, joking that he was department head Dr. Romano's "oldest graduate assistant."

Meehan's love of teaching carried over to his presidency, as he desires to provide students with the highest level of education possible and keep the focus of the university student-centered.

Trustees

Col. C.W. Daugotte, Chairman
 Dr. Theron Montgomery, Executive Secretary
 Paul Carpenter
 Mrs. C.T. Fitzpack
 Robert Kennamer



Dwain Luce
 Pete Matthews
 Gus Masgrove
 Mrs. Madge Poole
 James Thornton



Directors

Buford Brooks, Director of Alumni
 Jerry N. Cole, Athletic Director
 Gary Dempsey, Director, Personnel Services
 Claude Gaddy, Director, Special Services
 Jimmy Green, Director, Data Processing



Gilbert A. Guerra, Director, Building Services
 Jack Hopper, Administrative Assistant to President & Director of Public Relations
 Eugene Jones, Director, Education Advisement, Admissions, Certification
 Ben Kirkland, Comptroller, Business Office
 Jim McArthur, Director, Engineering and Maintenance



William A. Meehan, Director, Academic Advisement & Assistant to vice president of academic affairs
 David Nichols, Chief of University Police
 Dr. Albert M. Searway, Director, Federal Project
 Dr. Jerry Smith, University Registrar
 Larry Smith, Director, Financial Aid



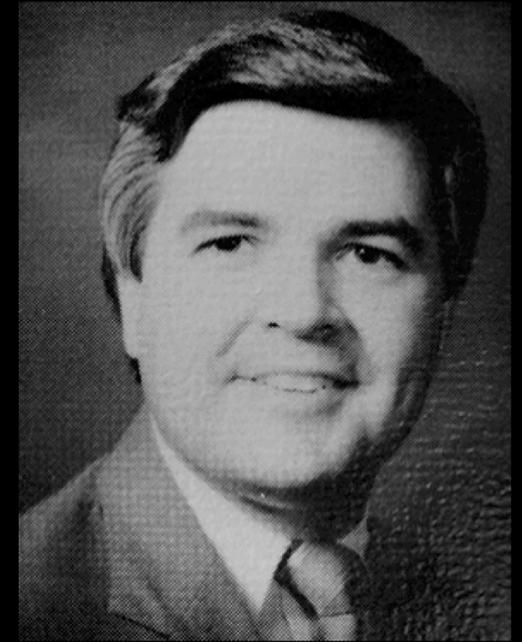
Dr. John R. Stewart, Director, International House

The Legacy of William Meehan: Paving the Road to the Presidency

By Heather Greene

While Dr. William A. Meehan has been a figure in 47 years of Jacksonville State University history, the road between the classroom and the presidency consisted of a few stops along the way.

Meehan served in several other roles including coordinator of medical technology, director of academic advisement, assistant to the vice president for academic affairs, acting vice president for academic affairs, associate vice president for academic and student affairs, and acting vice president for institutional advancement. As if his plate wasn't full enough, he also taught a biology lab class or two on the side, just because he loved teaching.



Above: Meehan as director of academic advisement at JSU in the 1980s.



Above: Dr. Meehan also served as advisor for Sigma Nu fraternity.

Having served under President Dr. Ernest Stone while he was a faculty member, Meehan began to step into administrative roles under the leadership of Presidents Dr. Theron Montgomery and Dr. Harold McGee. His transition from the classroom to the administration came when the university received a Title III grant in 1979 and needed someone to take over academic advisement. Montgomery approached Meehan and asked if he was interested in the position, which consisted of coordinating all of the advisement activities for the university.

At Dr. Montgomery's 90th birthday party at JSU earlier this month, Meehan joked that he had been hired five times by Montgomery and always asked if that meant he had consequently been fired four times, to which Montgomery would always reply, "No, I just moved you around."



Above: Dr. Meehan as acting vice president for academic affairs in 1993.

Montgomery was the first to hire Meehan at JSU, persuading him to turn down multiple job offers and join the biology faculty in 1977. When asked what stood out to him about Meehan, Montgomery said, "He was a hard worker, and he was intelligent."

From 1979 to 1998, Meehan assumed several roles of increasing responsibility in student affairs, ultimately becoming associate vice president for academic and student affairs. For a decade he was responsible for providing academic counseling and coaching to students who were struggling in school, as well as working with faculty and deans on assisting those students with remediation. He also oversaw admissions, recruiting, and the dual enrollment program.

After filling in as acting vice president for institutional advancement for a year, Meehan was named president of JSU in 1999. Dr. Rebecca Turner, who worked closely with him as head of the Department of Sociology and Social Work, stepped into his shoes in the office of associate vice president for academic and student affairs. She said Meehan was great at encouraging students who were having difficulties, as well as advising faculty and staff on academic policies and processes.

"He has always been a people person, so that role suited him well," Turner said. "As a department head, I saw him as wise and someone we could turn to in a dilemma - a go to guy."

Meehan's legacy as a student advocate carries over from generation to generation. Sherrie Bruce, '82, who was a student during Meehan's student administration days, returned to JSU with her son in 2013 for Meet the Gamecocks.





Above: Meehan at an airport in 1991.

“My husband, Gil Bruce, ’82, and I were thrilled our son John had chosen to attend JSU,” said Bruce. “We spoke with Dr. Meehan that day, telling him John would be on campus that Fall 2013. Dr. Meehan was so nice to John that afternoon and even gave him a coveted JSU pin. John likes to tell everyone his pin came from the president! About a week later, John received an email from Dr. Meehan welcoming him to campus and inviting him to stop by his office anytime, and telling John to let him know if he needed his assistance. What a wonderful gesture! I still don't know how he remembered his name from all the people he talked to that day. Dr. Meehan has always been so gracious every time I've been around him. He has been a wonderful representative of our beloved JSU.”

Another individual who remembers Meehan during this time period is Darren Douthitt, superintendent of Anniston City Schools.

“It will be very difficult for Jacksonville State University to replace Dr. Meehan,” said Douthitt. “I have known him since 1985, when he served as an advisor to the Inter-Fraternity Council. Dr. Meehan impressed me then as a person who had the students' best interest at heart. Almost 30 years later, I am even more impressed with his unique ability to connect with students, alumni and staff. He sacrificed the best years of his life to fulfill the role of college president. Dr. Meehan has been a dedicated servant leader at Jacksonville State University and I will miss him dearly. It is my hope that his retirement is replete with longevity and serenity.”



A photograph of a man in a dark suit and white shirt, seen from behind, carrying a young girl on his back. The girl has curly brown hair with a red bow and is wearing a red dress. She is looking towards the camera with a neutral expression. The background is a blurred indoor setting with wood paneling.

The Legacy of William Meehan: The Family Man

By Heather Greene



Dr. William A. Meehan is often considered a father figure by Jacksonville State University students, but he is Dad to three children of his own – Drew, Will and Carol Grace – who have had the opportunity to view JSU from the perspective of the President’s Home.

When he became president of JSU in 1999, Meehan and his wife, Beth, moved to campus with the youngest and most children of any other JSU president: five-year-old twin boys, Drew and Will, and infant Carol Grace. The President’s Home had to be childproofed and renovated to accommodate the family of five, or as Meehan joked in a 2000 interview, to “protect the campus from the kids.”

The Meehan children have called JSU home for most of their lives. So what has it been like growing up on a college campus?

“They went to every university event that we went to,” Meehan said. “In order to keep the family lifestyle, whether it was a basketball game or a community event, we would include them and would all go.” Meehan fondly recalls how his children would often ask, “Daddy, are you speaking again? Do we have to listen to you again?”

“Growing up in the President’s Home is all I have ever known,” explained Carol Grace Meehan, a 16-year-old sophomore at Jacksonville High School. “So, for me, that was my normal. Honestly, when I was little, I thought everyone’s dad was a president at JSU!”

The Meehan children explained that JSU afforded them many opportunities, especially for travel, that they might not normally have had. Carol Grace named their 2005 trip to Paris as a highlight: “On our last day in Paris, my brothers and I both thanked them [parents] for dragging us through Paris.”

An avid volleyball player, Carol Grace will be sitting with her parents in the stands during the 2015 football season, something they have never been able to do as a family. Dr. and Mrs. Meehan usually spend home games in the suites, entertaining special guests and dignitaries.

"For everything we are going to miss, there is going to be something we are going to be able to enjoy that we haven't ever been able to," explained Mrs. Meehan.

Following her high school graduation, Carol Grace plans to attend college, major in communications, and become a missionary.



Currently, twins Drew and Will, 20, are juniors at Auburn University, but return to Jacksonville each summer for classes. Prior to moving to Auburn, they both completed dual enrollment courses at JSU while in high school, something Carol Grace plans to do next year, and were prepared to step into the college lifestyle having grown up on a college campus.

On his dual enrollment experience, Drew, who is studying pre-medicine, explained, "It helped me prepare for what a collegiate level class was really about - a great eye-opening experience that I would suggest to any upcoming college student."

Drew has undoubtedly jumped full-force into the collegiate lifestyle, as he is a member of the Theta Chi Fraternity, SGA Persons with Disabilities Committee, National Society of Collegiate Scholars, Phi Eta Sigma Honor Society, Impact Volunteer Program, Alpha Lambda Delta Honor Society, Microbiology Club, and serves as student worker at the Auburn University College of Veterinary Medicine.

While there was shock at his father's retirement, Drew is also looking forward to the many opportunities he and his family will have in the near future. "I would like to thank the whole JSU family for the opportunity given to my family and for all the wonderful memories made together."

Regarding his dad's retirement, Will stated, "I was very proud of him. He has done a great job as president. It will be weird not to see him in that office, but I am still proud of him and what he has accomplished."

Will goes on to express his own aspirations, "To live a life half as well as my father has. He is spiritually sound, a strong family man and well respected everywhere he goes. All these are goals I have for my own life, and my Dad has given me a great example to learn from."

It seems Will is already beginning to follow in his father's steps, as he is currently serving as president of the Sigma Pi fraternity and an inter fraternity council court representative at Auburn University. He is majoring in accounting.

The Meehan children explained that they, thankfully, never really had to draw the line between their personal lives and JSU, as their parents were very clear about what was professional and what was personal.



While running a university and raising a family demands that Dr. and Mrs. Meehan juggle a consistently busy schedule, many of the duties of taking the children to baseball and volleyball practices fell to Beth, who is looking forward to a time of retirement and a calmer school year in the coming months.

Even his decision to retire was discussed via a phone conversation while Dr. and Mrs. Meehan were in two separate states, an approach to communication and decision making that they have had to resort to often with their demanding schedules. Meehan's desire to give 100 percent of himself to the JSU family and his own family kept his scheduled packed with appearances and obligations 24/7.

"It's very difficult to be in two places at one time," stated Dr. Meehan. "I never did master that."

While they made an effort for at least one parent to attend all their children's school performances and athletic events, the demands of being President and First Lady required sacrifices for the entire family. The couple joked that they might spend some of their retirement time watching the home videos of their kids at various events throughout the years when one or the other parent was unable to attend.

The desire to spend more time with his family - to slow down and enjoy his golden years with his dear wife - is the reason Dr. Meehan decided to step away from the only life he has known for the past 47 years. He now jokes that, in retirement, Mrs. Meehan is getting "double the husband for half the pay." It's an arrangement she's happy to accept.

Like so many other couples, Dr. and Mrs. Meehan first met at JSU. "Jax State brought us together," Mrs. Meehan laughed. "I got two JSU degrees - a real academic one and an Mrs. degree!"



Six years after first meeting, the couple went on their first date on January 11, 1992. That same year, they were married. In December 2014, they celebrated their 22nd anniversary.

In retirement, Meehan plans to travel and renovate their Jacksonville home, the Dogwood House.

"I was told I have the outside and she does the inside," explained Dr. Meehan on the subject of their upcoming home renovation projects.

Their first trip will come right before they officially retire - the Meehans are accompanying the JSU alumni group on a trip to Ireland in March. They also have some road trips planned. Wherever their journey takes them, Jacksonville State University will never forget the Meehan Family and the sacrifices they have made for the university.





The Legacy of William Meehan: Community Leader

By Buffy Lockette and Heather Greene

Perhaps it was because he was born in the quaint Connecticut village of Wethersfield, "Ye Most Auncient Towne" in the New England state, but when William A. Meehan first learned of Jacksonville, Ala. – a small mountain town set in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains – he knew it was the place for him.

The son of an insurance underwriter, Meehan moved to Dallas, Texas, for elementary school and then Birmingham, Ala., for the remainder of his adolescence. Upon graduating from Shades Valley High School in Homewood, Meehan was recruited to Jacksonville State University by Dean Gus Edwards.

"I sent in my paperwork and I was accepted," Meehan said. "The first time I ever came to campus was when my parents brought me. It looked like the right sized institution for me, and I felt it was a good fit at that time."

Meehan's parents thought it was important for him to leave the nest and stretch his wings for college. "My father said that he wanted me to leave the area – I had to go to a school that was at least 80 miles away," Meehan said. "So that's one of the reasons I came to JSU, and I fell in love with it."

Despite receiving enticing job offers in Birmingham and Mobile after completing his bachelor's and master's degrees in biology at JSU, Meehan decided to make Calhoun County home and accepted an instructor position at JSU in 1977. He has spent nearly 40 years employed at the university – 16 as president – and is well regarded both on and off campus as a caring and cooperative community leader. Locally, Meehan is currently active in the Exchange Club and Rotary Club and has served on the Board of Directors for United Way of East Central Alabama, Anniston Museum of Natural History, and the Calhoun and Etowah County Chambers of Commerce. He and his wife, Beth, team-teach with two other couples a youth Sunday school class for grades 7-12 at First Baptist Church of Jacksonville.

Over the years, Meehan has also served on the Board of Directors for the Alabama Partnership for Children, chaired the Calhoun County Relay for Life and Heart Walk, chaired the Friends of Scouting campaign for the Choccolocco District of the Boy Scouts of America, served on the Citizen's Advisory Committee of the East Alabama Metropolitan Planning Organization, served on the Board of Directors for the East Alabama Regional Planning and Development Commission, co-chaired with Anniston Mayor Chip Howell the 2003 Jimmy Carter Work Project and Habitat for Humanity, and served on the advisory board for the Knox Concert Series.



Above: Dr. Meehan speaking in the Alabama State Senate.



Above: Alabama Governor Bob Riley and Dr. Bill Meehan



Above: Dr. Meehan speaking at the press conference for the Lt. Dan Band event, a fundraiser to build a "smart" home for local hero Ben Tomlinson.

"As chairman of the Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce in 2007, Bill Meehan was integral in leading the Chamber forward, building business," said Linda Hearn, manager of the Calhoun County Chamber. "He brought the organization and community excitement and passion. As a well-respected leader the community admires, everyone wanted to play a part in this great organization, under his leadership."

Jacksonville mayor Johnny L. Smith said, "Dr. Meehan has done a great job as president of Jacksonville State University. He has worked hard to provide a good atmosphere for students, faculty and staff at JSU. Dr. Meehan's efforts did not end on campus. He was always concerned with the welfare of the entire community. I am happy that I was able to enjoy a good working relationship with President Meehan. Because of the good open relationship between the university and the city, a number of good things happened that might not ever have materialized."

Meehan has also been active outside of the region, serving in numerous leadership positions for the National College Athletic Association (NCAA) Board – including chairing the Presidential Advisory Group since 2011. He is also a leader among higher education professionals, representing his peers as chairman of the Council of

College and University Presidents for the Alabama Council on Higher Education from 2003-2005 and as chairman of the Higher Education Partnership's Council of University Presidents from 2005 to 2009. He was appointed by Gov. Bob Riley to serve as district chairman of the education committee of the Alabama Rural Action Commission from 2007 to 2010.

College and University Presidents for the Alabama Council on Higher Education from 2003-2005 and as chairman of the Higher Education Partnership's Council of University Presidents from 2005 to 2009. He was appointed by Gov. Bob Riley to serve as district chairman of the education committee of the Alabama Rural Action Commission from 2007 to 2010.



Left: Meehan and Alabama Governor Robert Bentley.

Right: Meehan holding a gift received from Queen Elizabeth II of England.



Throughout his presidency, Meehan has been recognized with numerous awards for his service, including:

- Calhoun County Chamber of Commerce's W. Roy Crow Leadership Award, 2000
- Association of Public Safety Communication Officials' Outstanding Achievement Award, 2000
- The Boys and Girls Club's Eagle Award for Outstanding Community Service, 2002
- Silver Beaver Award from the Greater Alabama Council of the Boy Scouts of America, 2003
- Educator of the Year by the Calhoun County Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities, 2005
- Open Door Award from the National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2005
- The Anniston Star's Citizen of the Year award, 2007
- Distinguished Citizen Award from the Boys Scouts of America Choccolocco District, 2008
- The Bobby L. Austin Community Impact Award, Gadsden Area Chamber of Commerce, 2008
- National Alumnus of the Year for the Delta Chi Fraternity, 2012
- Legacy Award, The Chamber, Gadsden and Etowah County, 2014
- The Jacksonville News' Citizen of the Year, 2015

Meehan's philanthropic nature is deeply rooted in his Christianity. "Faith is very important," Meehan said. "I think it's the foundation for whatever we do. I believe in that very much and I know I couldn't have gotten to where I am without my faith. I'm very grateful to God, to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, for helping me to where I am. So giving back is important. I can't imagine going to college or through life without faith."

Meehan feels that a university's mission is to help students discover a career they are passionate about – their calling – and provide the education and skills needed for them to achieve their goals. In turn, the university provides the state and region tomorrow's community leaders. While it is customary for each generation to eye younger generations with disapproval, Meehan couldn't be prouder of today's youth.

"What I like most about seeing our students today is that they are much more service-oriented than previous generations of students," Meehan said. "They are willing to reach out. They want to do more volunteer work. You see a lot of altruism in our students today and I'm very proud of that."

Perhaps even more important than his direct contributions to the community is Meehan's impact on the lives of thousands of students over the past four decades. From professor to advisor to administrator, he has set a strong example for others to follow and will be greatly missed when he retires on July 1.

Fortunately, he will continue to reside in Jacksonville in retirement. What makes the city so special?

"It's the people, there's no doubt about it," he said. "The people are very special here."



Above: Dr. Meehan and other community leaders on National Arbor Day.

The Legacy of William Meehan: The Presidency

By Heather Greene





Dr. Meehan's first day as president.

When Dr. William Arthur Meehan retires from Jacksonville State University on July 1 after 16 years in Bibb Graves Hall, he will go down in university history having held one of the longest presidencies. Only Presidents Clarence W. Daugette (1899-1942) and Houston Cole (1942-1971) served longer terms. Yet it was a role he never imagined he would play.

“When I went into this business, it was to teach and to be with students,” Meehan said. “I think helping students reach their goals, and being able to add value to the experience of all those at the university – to the students, to the faculty and staff – if I can say I’ve added value to that experience, that’s been the most rewarding part.”

During his inauguration address in early 2000, Meehan expressed his strong desire to provide a caring academic atmosphere for students, combining “head” and “heart” work. Judging by the outpouring of letters sent to the university’s Office of Public Relations through www.jsu.edu/meehan-memories, Dr. Meehan has succeeded in that goal.





Dr. Glen Browder, former U.S. Congressman and Emeritus Professor of American Democracy at JSU, stated, “Dr. Bill Meehan has been a great president and, more than that, he has epitomized JSU's reputation as the Friendliest Campus in the South. Our association goes back many years, and there have been too many memories to pick and describe. I guess my general gratitude is that he has never failed to ‘be there’ for us in the community – from helping us pursue a dream, to joining us in dealing with our problems, to listening to our complaints with sincere concern, to laughing with us as we exchange pleasantries.”



It is rare to find a university president who will go out on a sweltering Saturday morning to help freshmen move into the residence halls on move-in day, or who takes time to know students and faculty by name and greet them with a smile.

“It is an honor to be able to see your university president taking a stroll around campus and calling students by their first names,” said Crystal Sharp, a senior majoring in secondary education/English Language Arts. “He has remembered my name every time I have seen him! He is honestly the most personable person I think I have ever met in my lifetime.”

Such face-to-face interactions have earned the affections of students, faculty, staff and alumni. While Meehan's warmth and compassion have never changed over the past 16 years, many other transformations have taken place on campus. Here are just a few of the highlights:

1999- 2000 – There was a 45.5 percent increase in the number of distance learning students. Technological advances continued across campus as the Master of Science in Systems and Software Development was introduced and The Chanticleer student newspaper debuted its first online edition. The Montgomery Building Renovation was dedicated on April 17, 2000, and the Baseball Field House was completed in May 2000.

2000- 2001 –For the first time in 25 years, spring commencement was held in Paul Snow Stadium, as graduation outgrew the Pete Mathews Coliseum. To keep up with the growing student population, many improvements were made to the campus' physical and technological infrastructures. The electronic message boards in front of the Theron Montgomery Building and Pete Mathews Coliseum were installed to inform campus of special events and other news. On April 16, 2001, the McGee Science Center, named in honor of past president Dr. Harold McGee, was dedicated. Adjacent Martin Hall also received a remodel. On the other side of campus, the Jack Hopper Dining Hall underwent a facelift and the Academic Center for Excellence (ACE) completed its first year in its new location on the third floor of the Theron Montgomery Building. On August 30, 2001, JSU and Gadsden State Community College signed a new co-admission agreement that would make transferring to JSU a seamless experience for Gadsden students. Blackboard – now a common software program used campus wide – was introduced, with five classes offered fully online. Also that summer, JSU got its own email system called GEM, an acronym for "Gamecock E-Mail."





2001- 2002 – JSU mourned for the victims of the September 11th attacks, including Army Maj. Dwayne Williams, son of former JSU employee Pearl Williams. The entire campus responded by raising money for the American Red Cross and by holding candlelight vigils and a day of prayer and remembrance. JSU and Gadsden State came together through two separate building projects. First, they purchased building 3181 at Fort McClellan, and second, the JSU Gadsden Joe Ford Economic Development Center was completed, allowing JSU and GSCC to house administrative offices and some classrooms. The Alabama Commission on Higher Education unanimously approved JSU’s proposal to establish the Institute for Emergency Preparedness.





The annual tradition of “JSU in Lights” was also begun under the Meehan administration in 2001. The annual reception serves as a time to bring the campus and local communities together and usher in the spirit of the holidays.



2002-2003 – JSU experienced an all-time high in enrollment, and also received an “A” rating by Standard & Poor’s for the General Tuition and Fee Bond Issue. On October 21, 2002, the Houston Cole Library was rededicated after an extensive remodel that included a new red granite exterior and roof. Also on this date, the campus kiosk at the newly completed Chief Ladiga Rail Trail was dedicated. Work also continued on the McClellan Child Development Center renovations and a new roadway to Chimney Peak, which paved the way for a new mountaintop observatory. The observatory project was funded with part of a \$1.8 million NASA grant establishing the Von Braun Scholars program to motivate greater interest in math and science among public school students. In Summer 2003, JSU played host to the Jimmy Carter Work Project for Habitat for Humanity by providing housing, facilities, food, and support for the thousands of volunteers, including President Carter. In one week, the JCWP built 36 new homes in the area. The library began implementing “universal borrowing,” which allows JSU students to borrow from other university libraries across Alabama.



Right: The library during reconstruction.

Below: The ribbon cutting ceremony for the library rededication.



Above and Right: The opening ceremony for the Chief Ladiga Trail.



2003 – 2004 –The university received its reaffirmation of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. Enrollment was, once again, at an all-time high, and the dietetics program received accreditation for the Didactic Program in Dietetics. JSU invested \$376,000 in renovations to the soccer field in time for August 29th season opening.

2004 – 2005 – JSU Athletics officially joined the Ohio Valley Conference (OVC). In the humanities, the English Language Institute was founded in the English department, providing non-credit programs to assist non-native English speakers in achieving English proficiency for academic and professional purposes. JSU's ROTC program was among the top 10 percent in the nation. Dual enrollment and graduate studies were both up in enrollment. The JSU steam plant, Abercrombie and Luttrell Halls, were demolished. Based upon data obtained through an Economic Impact study by the Center of Economic Development, JSU's economic impact was estimated as \$325 million and more than 7,952 jobs in Calhoun and Etowah counties. In April 2005, Bob and Lou Kennamer Hall was dedicated. The \$2.5 million, 6,000 square foot facility houses the William Taylor Stewart Strength and Conditioning Center and athletic department administrative offices.



2005 – 2006 – Alumni from around the world traveled to Paris to celebrate the International House program's 60-year reunion. In August 2005, move-in commenced in the extensively remodeled Ayers Hall. Artificial turf was laid in Paul Snow Stadium just in time for the 2005 season. In June 2006, some JSU departments participated in the university's first cycle of Program Review, which established a system of continuous improvement among campus departments.



2006 – 2007 – Now a staple on every college campus, Wi-Fi was made available to students, faculty, and staff at JSU. The College of Commerce and Business Administration was included in the 2006 Princeton Review's "The Best 237 Business Schools," placing the business program in the top 10 percent in the nation. New labs were established in Wallace Hall, Brewer Hall, and the Field House. On January 22, 2007, the Board of Trustees approved the university's first Comprehensive Strategic Plan, which focused on quality of education, citizenship and leadership opportunities for students, research and service, technology, increased efficiency and effectiveness of administrative processes and services, and sound financial planning.



2007 – 2008 – JSU’s first-ever Freshman Convocation was held at the Pete Mathews Coliseum, starting a new tradition in which new students ring in the beginning of their college careers by striking a bell. Also this year, students were able to register themselves for classes through the Banner system. On October 15, 2007, the Gladys M. Carlisle Fine Arts Facility was dedicated in the presence of the trustee for whom it was named. Sadly, Mrs. Carlisle passed away less than a month later. In February 2008, the university celebrated its 125th anniversary. On April 22, 2008, President Meehan appeared in the Alabama State Legislature to receive a proclamation recognizing this accomplishment.





2008 – 2009 – A new JSU logo and marketing campaign were brought to life. A recruitment trip was made to China to expand opportunities for collaborations with Chinese universities. On February 21, JSU celebrated the end of the university’s capital campaign, “The Power of 125... Join the Celebration!” at the new JSU Little River Canyon Center. The campaign exceeded expectations by 42 percent and closed at \$31.36 million. The following day, the 23,000 square-foot, LEED-certified Canyon Center officially opened to the public. The Canyon Center houses the university’s Little River Canyon Field School and the National Park Service.



2009 – 2010 - The Gamecock Express transportation system was launched. Taizhou University students began to study in the English Language Institute. JSU launched its prestigious new Elite Honors program, which provides academically gifted students with an enriched educational experience.

2010 – 2011 – During this academic year, JSU achieved its highest enrollment ever: 9,504. One of the StormReady universities in Alabama, JSU was awarded a grant from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security through the Alabama Emergency Management Agency to develop a hazard mitigation plan in regards to natural disasters. An online orientation website was developed, which is especially useful for non-traditional students. The summer reading program was implemented, with Dennis Covington’s “Salvation on Sand Mountain” serving as the first selection. JSU became one of the many universities across the country to participate in the Red Balloon Initiative sponsored by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. Also during this year, a Board of Visitors was established for each academic college. On September 11, 2010, more than 22,000 fans waited out heavy thunderstorms to see the Gamecocks host their first home game in a newly renovated stadium that includes a modern residence hall and luxury suites. As part of the ceremony, the playing surface was christened Burgess-Snow Field.

Right: Author Doc Henley speaks on his book *Wine to Water*, which was chosen as a JSU Summer Read in 2012.

Below: Burgess-Snow Stadium and Stadium Towers.





2011 – 2012 - The JSU Marching Southernners traveled to London, England, to lead the Queen's New Year's Day Parade and kick off the Diamond Jubilee. In fall 2011, JSU welcomed the most academically prepared freshman class in the history of the university, with an average ACT of 22.3. The biggest news of the year was the university's reclassification as a Level V institution by SACSCOC, establishing JSU as a doctoral granting university. The university's first doctoral program, a Doctor of Science in Emergency Management, was launched. A pilot program that provided iPads to 150 students in two classrooms – one in the College of Arts and Sciences and one in the College of Education and Professional Studies – also got underway. The university got its first collaborative classroom, which was in Physical and Earth Sciences. The Collaborative Regional Education program (CORE) was created to establish partnerships between JSU and K-12 school systems, with the mission of equipping schools and teachers with new methods and technologies in the classroom to better prepare students for college and the workforce. JSU's new Institute for Research and Collaboration added six research centers.





2012 – present – There was a record set for first-time freshman, with 1,414 new faces on campus in 2012. Plans were developed and funding was secured to create the Faculty Commons, a center for teaching and learning that provides professional development to faculty related to using new technologies and methodologies in the classroom. In June 2013, JSU held the inaugural CORE Academy, a three-day conference that brought together more than 270 educators to learn how to best incorporate technology into their classroom. In December 2013, the Institute of Research and Collaboration received a \$12 million U.S. Department of Education Investing in Innovation (i3) grant, which is being used to fund, measure and expand the CORE program for five years. Planning began for “Deeply Rooted, Future Driven: A Campaign for Jacksonville State University,” which has an initial goal of \$35.1 million. In fall 2014, the university implemented a Quality Enhancement Program (QEP), “Fast Forward: Using 21st Century Tools to Improve Critical Thinking Skills.” Improvements made to the university’s infrastructure in 2014 included a \$488,000 softball field renovation and a \$2.2 million HVAC renovation to the Pete Mathews Coliseum. In December 2014, JSU received reaffirmation of its accreditation through SACSCOC.





There is no doubt that JSU is a better place because of Dr. and Mrs. Meehan and their family. They have left a lasting legacy upon the university and the numerous students who have had the privilege of attending under the Meehan administration.

Jacksonville State University would like to thank Dr. Meehan and his family for their time, effort, and service over past 16 years and wish them the best in the years to come.



Heather Greene, Editor

Contributing Writers

Heather Greene

Buffy Lockette

Angie Finley

Photography

Steve Latham

Matt Reynolds

Angie Finley

Opal Lovett

Alex Stillwagon

Jacksonville State University

Division of University Advancement

Dr. Charles Lewis, *Vice President for University Advancement*

Tim Garner, *Executive Director of Marketing and Communications*

Buffy Lockette, *Director of Public Relations*



OFFICE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS
JACKSONVILLE STATE UNIVERSITY

