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## Winthrop's Focus Is to Guide Students Through Education Right for the Times

Winthrop University

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# Winthrop's Focus Is to Guide Students Through Education Right for the Times

## Quick Facts

- President Anthony DiGiorgio spoke to faculty and staff Wednesday in McBryde Hall.
- DiGiorgio also spoke about Touchstones, or developmental courses for students.



*President Anthony DiGiorgio*

ROCK HILL, S.C. - Students who gather for the opening of Winthrop University's fall semester next week should know "there is no finish line on higher learning for anyone" these days, the institution's president told faculty and staff Wednesday.

Speaking under the arched Tudor-style beams of Winthrop's 1909 **McBryde Hall**, **President Anthony DiGiorgio**, now in his 19<sup>th</sup> year as Winthrop president, told the assemblage that "if a degree affirms only the mastery of a single discipline as it is understood today, it will not serve our graduates in the world of tomorrow.... Higher learning today also must instill in graduates the habits of lifelong inquiry and the habits of lifelong creativity" if it is to equip students for the professional and civic demands of 21<sup>st</sup>-century life.

Referencing the findings of several future-focused authors and workforce study groups, DiGiorgio cited recent trends toward employers moving even white-collar jobs to off-shore employees and charged his faculty and staff with the responsibility to continue Winthrop's tradition of delivering an education "as the progress of the times may require" to help build an economy focused on more creative and less-exportable jobs.

In current times, he said, that kind of education meets business expectations that by the time students graduate, they are "comfortable with ideas and abstractions, good at both analysis and synthesis, creative and innovative, self-disciplined and well-organized, able to learn very quickly and work well as a member of a team and have the flexibility to adapt quickly ... as the shifts in the economy become ever faster and more dramatic."

Developing those capacities is required of all Winthrop students, regardless of major, through a series of foundational courses developed in recent years by Winthrop faculty. They are now known as the "**Touchstones**" courses because students can be expected to use the skills taught in them as touchstones throughout their lives. These include information-gathering from a variety of disciplinary perspectives, synthesizing and analyzing that information, and making good decisions based on that analysis. The "Touchstones" coursework is solidified through special programming delivered in campus residence halls, where traditional-age students reside during their first two years at Winthrop.

Beginning this year, Winthrop students will also have the opportunity to augment their degree with a formal "distinction in leadership," reflecting their completion of a series of leadership courses and experiences designed to give them an attractive addition to their resumes.

Winthrop expects to enroll a freshman class of approximately 1,000, which is the capacity of current residence hall spaces designed for first-year students. DiGiorgio indicated the university this year will be looking at options for expanding its residential capacity so it can increase enrollment, now that it

has other new academic and auxiliary facilities coming on line.

Two new buildings opening for classes next week are:

- The 137,000-square-foot **Lois Rhame West Health, Physical Education and Wellness Center**, which will house academic programs in health, physical education and sport management, as well as wellness and recreational facilities for the campus community. With its leading-edge environmentally conscious construction, the West Center will be both the largest and the most energy-efficient building on Winthrop’s main campus.
- **Owens Hall**, named for alumna and trustee Glenda Pittman Owens and her husband, Gerry. The 32,200 square-foot building offers 16 new classrooms and two spaces accommodating up to 100 students to allow certain classes to meet concurrently for special events. A computer lab, two conference rooms and a student lounge will round out the facility, with all classrooms equipped with ‘smart’ technology.

DiGiorgio said demolition of Winthrop’s original 1915-era **Peabody Gym** will begin in a few weeks, now that the West Center is in use. In its place will be built a new Campus Center that will provide a variety of meeting spaces for use by Winthrop’s numerous student organizations in building leadership and teamwork skills, a “smart wall” with updated campus news events, plus space for student service offices. Multipurpose banquet rooms for special events, a 225-seat movie theatre, conference room, the campus bookstore and post office, as well as casual dining options designed to promote interaction among all members of the campus community also will be included. Groundbreaking for that building will be later in the academic year.

Site preparation also is under way for a **College of Business Auditorium** adjacent to the Thurmond Building. Construction on that facility should begin by the end of Fall semester, DiGiorgio said.

The campus development plan both paves the way for Winthrop’s growth in the years ahead and moves the heart of campus westward, in support of the City of Rock Hill’s efforts to redevelop its urban core and revitalize the “**Textile Corridor**,” an area of former textile mills between the Winthrop campus and downtown.

Winthrop is partnering with the city and the private sector in fostering private investment in a mixed-use project that will focus on an active-adult retirement community, as well as retail and commercial uses.

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