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# Dignitaries From State, D.C. Praise President DiGiorgio at Tribute

## Quick Facts

- DiGiorgio will step down in 2013 after 24 years as president.
- U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., called DiGiorgio the “Strom Thurmond of higher education.”
- Rock Hill Mayor Doug Echols presented DiGiorgio and wife Gale with a key to the city and a proclamation.



*Gary Williams, Harry Dalton and Carlos Evans*

ROCK HILL, S.C. – Dignitaries from Washington, D.C. and across South Carolina traveled to **Winthrop University** Oct. 18 to praise the **tenure of long-term president Anthony DiGiorgio**.

The tribute event attended by nearly 350 people highlighted DiGiorgio’s achievements as he prepares to step down in the summer of 2013 after what will be 24 years as president.

**U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C.**, called DiGiorgio the “Strom Thurmond of higher education” for his longevity as South Carolina’s longest serving public university president. He continued that the university has expanded in stature, size and scope due to DiGiorgio’s vision, even with state funding dropping from 50 percent to the current 9 percent and despite the economic downturn since 2007.

Under the president’s leadership, Winthrop moved from college to university status, attained 100% accreditation for programs for which accreditation is offered, increased minority enrollment, built a new wellness center, campus center, residence hall and several academic buildings and expanded its athletic facilities.

“We all yearn for a night like this,” Graham said, complimenting the president for bringing others together to buy into his dreams.

Other accolades poured in as **S.C. Rep. Gary Simrill, R-Rock Hill**, presented a framed copy of a S.C. House resolution introduced by the York County delegation that recognized DiGiorgio for his exemplary leadership. “Sir, you are victorious. You brought a lot of us to victory,” Simrill concluded.

**Rock Hill Mayor Doug Echols** gave the president and **First Lady Gale DiGiorgio** a proclamation and key to the city. “Your legacy will continue as a bright torch for the future,” said Echols, who has worked closely with the president on many ventures, the latest being the **College Town Action** plan and efforts to connect downtown Rock Hill with the campus.

Along with a framed portrait of the DiGiorgios presented by the **Board of Trustees** for the **DiGiorgio Campus Center**, Foundation members held up an enlarged check for \$201,459 for the **DiGiorgio “Progress of the Times” Fund** for student and faculty research. Donations were given by trustees, faculty, staff, alumni and friends.

“President DiGiorgio has changed the face of Winthrop so much,” said **Gary Williams**, chair of the **Winthrop Foundation Board**.

**First Lady Gale DiGiorgio** received her own surprise during the festivities as **Board of Trustees**

**Chair Dalton Floyd** conferred upon her an honorary doctoral degree. She told the crowd that she finished all but her dissertation before she moved to Rock Hill but, after getting involved in the community, she never completed the work.

The DiGiorgios will remain in Rock Hill during retirement, a place they found welcoming when they moved here in 1989.

Before they moved to South Carolina, the couple lived and worked in different communities. "I was pleased for both of us to come to one community to work and to live," Gale DiGiorgio said.

The president ended the evening by thanking community members for their partnership and commitment. "We thank all of you, community members and colleagues alike for that commitment, and yes, that Vision," DiGiorgio said.

Before this academic year, DiGiorgio had conferred 18,500 undergraduate degrees and 6,300 graduate degrees. With nine months and two commencements left to go, DiGiorgio is winding down. He bid to the crowd sayonara, a simple acceptance of fact. "That a time has come that 'it must be so.'"

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