

PRESIDENTIAL  
*Inauguration*



*Address Given By*  
KIRK EDWARD PETERSON  
*On the Occasion of*  
*His Inauguration as the Twenty-Third*  
*President of Chowan University*

*April Fourth*  
*Two Thousand Nineteen*



*Inaugural Address by Kirk Edward Peterson  
On the Occasion of His Inauguration  
as the Twenty-Third President of Chowan University*

*April 4, 2019*

**C**hairman Rose, Chowan University Board of Trustees, Board of Visitors, Chancellor White, Dr. Stanley Lott (Chowan's 21st President), Chowan University family, family and friends visiting from Illinois, Ohio, Connecticut, Wisconsin, Iowa, and Alabama. My family and I are honored to be a part of this historical and amazing institution and this welcoming community. Thank you for being here today to celebrate Chowan University.

I want to recognize some exceptionally special attendees today.

My wife and amazing partner, Rachel, whose love and support have helped to make this day possible. While my mother may disagree, I have been told that I married well above myself. I stand here today because of her love and encouragement... married to a woman that I do not deserve.

My three sons: Caleb, Cody, and Justin. I love you more than words can describe. Thank you for being wonderfully talented, loving, and playfully ornery sons. I am also proud that Caleb will transfer to Chowan this fall to continue his education and play baseball for Coach Furlough.

My Mother, from Rock Island, Illinois, who has endured great loss, but has always been a rock for our family. Thank you for the unconditional love, support, and encouragement.

My brother, Drew, from Trussville, Alabama, who is the Parks and Recreation Superintendent for the City of Trussville. Drew has always been my hero in the way he approaches life, including hardship and triumph.

My sister, Elise, and my brother-in-law, Brian Montanari. They are more than family; they are friends and even better people. Elise is the Vice President for Personal Insurance Analytics at Traveler's Insurance and Brian is the President and CEO of Habco Industries in Glastonbury, Connecticut.

Dr. Rich Pein from La Crosse, Wisconsin. Rich's mentoring and coaching

while I attended the University of Wisconsin- La Crosse are deeply cherished.

Dr. Patricia Beitel and Charlene Bandurski from Charleston, Illinois. Dr. Beitel served as my major professor at The University of Tennessee, where she encouraged and mentored my professional aspirations. Dr. Beitel, I want you to know how important you are in my life: professionally and personally.

Lastly, my family and friends who have traveled great distances to attend. Thank you, Aunt Nancy, Aunt Linda, Vicki Gray, Jacob Peterson, Kim and Ron Ross, Mom Labbous, Stephanie, Kalie and Austin Clements, Scott and Jennifer Warren, Jason and Lisa Oliver, Pastor Tony Pena, Robin Miller and Tony Joy, Cherie Moore, and Terry and Julie Markin.

As many of you know, I served Chowan University in numerous capacities, including Associate Professor of Sports Studies and Physical Education; Department Chair of the SSPE; Founding Dean, School of Education and Graduate Studies; and as Associate Provost from 2004-2010. Back then, I arrived on campus with my beautiful wife, Rachel, and two very little boys, looking to begin my career with the dream of assisting Dr. Moore in advancing the academics of Chowan University.

I had the privilege of having amazing mentors who encouraged me to challenge myself personally and professionally, take the knowledge and confidence that each ingrained in me, and see what the future had in store as I dreamed of advancing my career. Dr. White and Dr. Moore, for your inspiration and for taking my many calls over the years, I am most grateful!

I left here in 2010 a young man, with high hopes, and, perhaps, unrealistic dreams. Frankly, I was leaving my comfort zone, my university family, to gain the knowledge and experience I needed, away from the people I trusted most.

We settled in a small university town in Ohio and I accepted the position of Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs at Urbana University. My sons grew up in Urbana. I grew up in Urbana. We embraced the campus community, our church, the schools, Urbana University students and faculty.

I was eventually named President of Urbana University and tasked with saving a 160 + year old university. While at Urbana, I worked closely with our students, strategic partners, the Board of Trustees, the faculty and staff of a financially compromised university. We made some incredible advancements and survived seemingly impossible challenges. We faced

uncertain times and a certain closure.

However, I am proud that Urbana University stands tall today due to the efforts, and prayers, of many wonderful people, some of whom are in attendance today.

In my personal life, I watched as many basketball, baseball, soccer games, and choral performances as I possibly could. I attempted to find balance between Dad and President, and with the help of Rachel, family and friends, we pulled it off!

However, the most life-changing experience was losing my father at Thanksgiving of 2017. That summer of 2017, he and I played lots of golf, talked about John Deere lawn tractors, and watched my boys play many games. I quickly learned how precious life is.

I miss him, but I do believe he is with me today. Mom, I think Dad would be very pleased.

Today, I stand in front of you with a little gray hair, high hopes, realistic and audacious dreams.

I am humbled; I am energetic; I know that Chowan is family – and family is everything. We have the heart to embrace the past and the courage to look into the future. I have faith in our staff, faculty, and administrators; and we all have Faith in the Future of our students!

I am thankful that the Board of Trustees has chosen me to lead Chowan University into the future. I accept the honorable position of President of this great University.

**IT IS GOOD TO BE HOME!**

Chowan is first, and foremost, a Christian University and will continue to remain true to this bedrock principle. The Christian character is interwoven throughout the history of Chowan, from the inception in 1848 as Chowan Baptist Female Institute to today as we proudly proclaim that we have Faith in the Future in our students and our University.

All students, faculty, and staff members bring a diverse background of faith and experiences. To this end, each person who attends, supports, or instructs is given a multitude of opportunities to celebrate one's faith walk, which we

pray ends in the embracing the gift of Jesus Christ. As Reverend Mari Wiles says, “we are intentional in our approach to make God Famous!”

A scripture that guides my life is Matthew 25:40. This passage speaks to the heart of service to others and states, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.”

Being a servant leader is as Matthew 20:28 states, “just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.”

Moreover, Philippians 2:3-4 states, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.”

I pray that I will lead by serving our students, faculty, staff, administration, and Board of Trustees. I pray that I will serve as an example of leading through service to others. In no place of the Good Book does it imply self before others!

My vision includes a strong partnership of transparency, integrity, and fairness; and I will continue to listen to the concerns and suggestions of the Board of Trustees and Visitors, alumni, administration, faculty, staff, and our greatest constituent, our students.

It is my job to be the strategic thinker, discerning listener, and active servant. I must lead those that teach, advise, and coach to nurture and maintain a positive attitude. It is my job to make certain that all stakeholders are united in our passion to ensure our students lead meaningful lives of lifelong learning, service to one another, and leadership with their heads, hands, and hearts.

I represent the University at all times and I am excited about the opportunities, whether planned or spontaneous, to tell the unique story of Chowan University and highlight the Mission, Vision, and Values of this historic institution.

As a Board member, administrator, faculty, or staff, we must always be eager to listen, learn, and improve. I am always looking for opportunities to tell the story of how well we teach, engage, advise, and mentor our students. Ultimately, we are here to transform lives.

These are the practices of our faculty and staff, and even after my 8-year

absence, I am extremely happy that this is as true today as it was in 2010... 2003.... and I assume in 1848.

Dr. White often used the term audacity leading up to and beyond his inauguration. I would like to play off this word and his philosophy of being bold in our goals for Chowan University.

We must continue to have the audacity to dream as the founding members, the “Chowan Saviors”, and visionary leaders, including Goodwin Cotton Moore, Archibald McDowell, Dr. Bruce Whitaker, and Chancellor White, have in times of prosperity and trial. These legendary leaders demonstrated a Faith in the Future of Chowan and her students. We will be no different!

They did not operate in fear, but instead led with determination, perseverance, tenacity, and audacity! They were resolved to transform lives and I am honored to follow these remarkable people.

I believe the greatest complement we can pay to past visionary leaders is to remain focused on our students, audacious in our goals, and demand new, innovative, and creative programs of excellence that are built on a Christian foundation.

And our foundation is rock solid!

Today, 80% of our faculty are terminally degreed from colleges and universities such as Alabama, Old Dominion, Syracuse, Arizona State, Mississippi State, Virginia, Auburn, Princeton Theological Seminary, Florida, Penn State, Illinois, Ohio State, Virginia Tech, Tennessee, Emory, East Carolina, Yale, and Julliard.

Our faculty members are a transformative force, committed to providing a transformative education.

The faculty and staff are some of the best and most caring you will find. They know their students by first name; they know if something has changed in a student’s life; and they are prepared to challenge, teach, and push their students to new limits. They are committed to teaching and they pray for student success. Failing is not an option.

In short, we are excellent in our profession and committed to Chowan and her students!

Our students are responsible for balancing the classroom, athletics, arts and club participation, for the classroom nourishes our minds, competition nourishes our bodies and the arts nourish our souls.

Chowan students, we expect you to get involved; it is your responsibility to be a good student, a committed student-athlete, a good neighbor, roommate and citizen. It is also your job to find happiness; to become champions in body, mind, and soul; and to create a balanced schedule.

Life is short; make some memories along the way. We pray that all of you are transformed by your time at Chowan. In addition, the memories, the people, the lessons learned, and the professional preparation leads to a lifetime of success and commitment to service to others. And, upon graduation, you will seek an active role in supporting the Alumni Association to ensure an opportunity at Chowan for the “students of promise.”

We will look to our alumni for prayer, investing in our students through scholarship and assisting with the sustainment of the endowment. Alumni are naturally our best recruitment officers, telling the story of their experiences, singing the praises of the institution. Chowan University alumni are family. Here, our family has a voice and your voice will be heard. Please share your many accomplishments with us and come “Home” often.

My vision for Chowan will remain true to the Strategic Plan, Mission, Vision, and Values of the University. The Board of Trustees, Senior Team, faculty, and staff will work to achieve the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan with the expectation of the University’s sustainable growth.

Therefore, we recommit to these ideals and we are resolved to advancing the calling of our students through teaching, learning, engaging, and serving, defined by the opportunities we create, by the lives we transform, and by the futures we shape.

We recommit to ensuring the University fosters its mission by ensuring its Christian character marks all its endeavors; equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and ethical values necessary to flourish in a diverse society; meeting the students’ social and spiritual needs through personal attention in a caring community; maintaining stewardship of its physical, financial, and human resources; and offering intercollegiate athletic programs that enhance the academic and personal development of all student-athletes while promoting individual and team success.



We recommit to our Values of Faith, Inclusion, Imagination, and Engagement. We believe that Faith in Your Future underscores all that we do. We value individuals with diverse backgrounds and points of view. We encourage a culture of lifelong learning. We believe that a spirit of service is central to our faith and learning traditions.

Sustainable growth will be very challenging given the expected market constraints in the foreseeable future. However, I am confident we have the people, tools, determination, and vision to turn our dreams into reality. How else could you explain the remarkable achievements of Chowan?

As Luke 12:48 states, "From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded". One does not achieve great things when great things are not expected!

Students, Faculty, Staff, Board of Trustees, Board of Visitors, and Friends: This is our time and I will treasure the work, the challenges, and the many wonderful opportunities ahead.

As Dr. Martin Luther King said, "Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase."

Together, I have Faith in Chowan University's Future!

Thank you and may God continue to bless Chowan University!







**CHOWAN**  
UNIVERSITY