



THIS WEEK'S PROGRAM

October 15, 2024

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*Dr. Sharon Gaber,
Chancellor, UNC Charlotte*
by Bill Bartee

Dr. Sharon Gaber began her remarks to Charlotte Rotary by noting several distinguished guests, visitors, and members who have a relationship with UNC Charlotte. Members **Elly Clary** (graduate), **Joel Ford** (UNC Board of Governors), **Clayton Woodard** (father of Charlotte 49ers head baseball coach) were on the dais and University Board of Trustee Chair and university alumnus, Dennis Bunker, was at the front table. They were joined by several others who went to UNC Charlotte when Dr. Gaber asked for a show of hands of former students of the University.

Gaber took the reins of the university in July 2020 becoming its fifth chancellor. She last spoke to our group during a 2021 Zoom meeting. This time she reiterated the quote, "Every great city has a great university", and Charlotte is fortunate to have impactful places of higher education with Queens University, Johnson C. Smith University, Central Piedmont, Johnson and Wales, and UNC Charlotte within the city limits. University of North Carolina Charlotte has specifically worked towards being one of the top public research universities in the United States.

This success is based on five columns of pursuit within the university:

Student Success and Opportunity

UNC Charlotte is ranked number one in North Carolina in community college transfers (more than 700 are from Central Piedmont this fall), first-

gen college student enrollment, and bachelor's degrees awarded to Hispanic students, and underrepresented students.

She then broke down the statistics of UNC Charlotte at a glance with 31,091 undergraduates and graduates this fall, 178,000+ alumni, and nearly 9,000 degrees awarded annually. One proud stat was that nearly 60% of these graduates and postgraduates continued residing in the Charlotte area afterward. The top majors at the university are Computer Science and Information Systems (CIS), Engineering, Healthcare, Nursing, Business, and Bio-Medicine and Bio-Research, with a diverse demographic of attendees within their record fall 2024 enrollment.

In North Carolina, UNC Charlotte is second only to NC State in awarding bachelor's degrees; the number one producer of Finance and Computer Science degrees in the state of North Carolina. Nearly 40% of the students are STEM students.

Rising Research

One of several reasons enrollment is climbing in the national ranks is its investment in research over the past decade. Research expenditures have increased by 272% during that respective time. This hasn't gone unnoticed with its upcoming recognition as a Carnegie R1 Research institution joining the ranks of NCSU, Duke, and UNC-Chapel Hill.

The university is pursuing growing areas in the world, such as Cyber-Security, Artificial Intelligence, and Innovation for the future, with an eye towards 5, 10, and 25 years from now. Specific schools of research mentioned and available on the campus are BATT Cave (Battery Technology Research), CIPHER (related to issues related to human health), and Charlotte AIR Institute (the first partnership of its kind in the nation between a major university and an airport).

Climbing the Ranks

U.S. News and World Report recently recognized the University as one of the fastest-rising universities in the United States. It was ranked #112 public university in 2022 and #81 in 2025. It was also recognized as the most innovative public university in North Carolina and number forty-five in the U.S.

Cultural Vibrancy

Cultural vibrancy is a key foundation of a great city and university. The Charlotte 49ers athletic program is helping take the lead as a newer member of the American Athletic Conference. They have won five AAC conference championships in their first season of membership. The football team continues to improve, the baseball team is having success, and the soccer team rose as high as #5 in the country this year.

Visual and Performing Arts have included over 100 performances and art exhibitions on campus and throughout the city of Charlotte bringing attention and partnership to the university. The

CO-LAB is a regional hub for entrepreneurship and innovation and is a part of the re-gained life of First Ward in the city.

Fundraising Success

Dr. Gaber shared a “sneak peek” of the upcoming \$500 million campaign during the 4th annual Niner Nation Week (<https://ninernationweek.charlotte.edu/>) November 10-17th of this year.

These five things and questions from the audience during the Tuesday lunch meeting of Charlotte Rotary included the ongoing encouragement and partnerships within the teaching profession and public schools, the continued talks with the incoming Wake Forest Medical School, and how the universities may be able to work together in some capacity, as well as the Klein College of Science that was made possible by a gift from Fred Klein.

One of the overarching messages during Dr. Sharon Gaber’s presentation was ways for the City of Charlotte and UNC Charlotte to be tied together in success. She encouraged her audience to connect with the university by attending a concert or game, hiring UNC Charlotte students, and partnering with the university in any way.

A recording of the meeting can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/1019967557>
The presenter’s introduction begins at approximately 20 minutes and 50 seconds.