

Service to the State: The Legacy of William C. Friday

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Introduction

Service to the State is an interactive digital project that explores the legacy of one of North Carolina's most influential citizens, William C. Friday. The president of the University of North Carolina (UNC) system for three decades, Friday was a vital champion for higher education in North Carolina during a period of turbulent growth and change in North Carolina's universities. But his influence extended well beyond higher education. In North Carolina, he was a dynamic force behind initiatives for economic development, poverty alleviation, literacy, and access to health care. Across the South and the nation, he was indefatigable in his crusades for access to education, federal student aid, and reforms in college sports. For students and faculty across the UNC system and for many citizens of North Carolina, Bill Friday's name is synonymous with public service. Thus, his legacy is seen and felt in the relationship between North Carolina's public flagship university and the communities it serves. *Service to the State* uses Friday as a means for examining the extent and strength of that relationship.

Objectives

Drawing on interviews from the Southern Oral History Program's (SOHP) Legacy of William Friday collection, the project positions Friday as a public servant of the state to provide the first digital interpretation of his legacy. The interviews in this collection focus on individuals who built on the legacy of Bill Friday in their organizations and efforts to confront poverty in North Carolina. In addition to documenting a variety of issue-oriented approaches to poverty (such as literacy, education, housing, and economic development), these interviews explore a range of approaches to affecting social change, including direct service, policy advocacy, community organizing, community development, and electoral politics. By engaging in a public-facing and critical examination of Friday's continued influence, this project provides an interface to discuss how his legacy has been adapted and changed. *Service to the State* is a space for a variety of communities both within and outside the University to consider how critical analysis of a university's leaders can transform the way we evaluate our approaches to public service and social change.

Digital Tools

Service to the State is published using Scalar, the Alliance for Networking Visual Culture's free, open-source authoring and publishing platform, designed for publishing long-form, born-digital scholarship online. Scalar enables users to assemble media from multiple sources and juxtapose them with their own writing in a variety of ways. There were two main advantages to using Scalar as a digital platform for publishing segments of oral histories. One is its ability to structure essay-length works in ways that take advantage of the unique capabilities of digital writing, including nested, recursive, and non-linear formats, which are formats similar to the structure of many oral histories. Second, Scalar allows for its users to assemble a number of different experiences through a series of encounters with the different pages, paths, tags, media, and annotations, where processes and narratives await to unfold in multiple directions. In this way, *Service to the State* allows for the user of the site to move forward and backward temporally and thematically, mirroring the form and style of the oral history interview.

Interview Excerpts



Bill Friday with students, 1978

"I was always devoted to education. It's a necessary part of development. Those who are not educated don't participate. I go back to a breakfast. When I was at NC State, the governors had me down quite a bit to talk with me about things. Governor Hodges asked me down one day and I had breakfast with him. He wanted to just talk about the state and what it needs. I said, "Governor, we must provide more education for scientists and engineers." And his response was a good one. He says, "If we do that, they just go somewhere else," which is capital exportation. I said, "Yes, but that's only half of the solution. You provide jobs with the education. If you can't provide the jobs and you just spend your money educating people to go to New York and what have you, you've exported your capital." And that was a fact that a lot of people began to recognize in North Carolina. I think Bill understood that. I was on a number of task forces and committees with Bill Friday. He always wanted to emphasize education and I did too, but you also have to emphasize job creation." Charles E. Bishop

"Now this is the fourth function of a major – any major public state-funded institution. Teaching, research, public service – and I say extended service. Public service in its traditional sense would not include all of what was done here." William C. Friday

"I think [in] a public university, there's an obligation of support, which comes from the broad community to the university [and] which this state has been very committed to. I think there's a mutuality which flows from that, which means Edward Kidder Graham, Frank Porter Graham, Bill Friday's notion that this university is literally in service to this state, the old Progressive idea that the public university is the mind in service to society. I think that's right at the core of what a public university is... That's central to a public university. If I was starting a public university and putting a lot of money into it, I would say, "I want this to be a particular sort of laboratory for democracy. I want you guys to help me understand what public policies work and which ones don't." So that mutuality between a public university and the felt needs of the community that sustains it is right at the core of what it means to be a public. I think we're losing it all over this United States. Frankly, we have folks here even in Chapel Hill – the great beacon of public universities – who have forgotten it and don't remember it. But those guys, Aycock, Friday, they never would forget it." Gene Nichol

"It's not about Bill Friday; it's about the citizens of North Carolina, and the world for that matter, and what he can do to play a role in the greater good." Donna Chavis



Bill Friday with Bill Moyer at UNC-TV, 1976

References

- R.39. Special Research Projects: Legacy of William Friday, Southern Oral History Program, Southern Historical Collection, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
- The Alliance for Networking Visual Culture, Scalar, August 30, 2016. <<http://scalar.usc.edu/features>>