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Windows to the Future

A Conversation with Dr. Appleton

Remembering the Iran Hostage Crisis

Outdoor Education Operation Uplink

Hot Shots **Surviving the Tsunami**

WINDOWS to the FUTURE

President James R. Appleton announced in early December that he would leave the presidency at the end of this academic year and assume the position of chancellor.

In this Q & A, Dr. Appleton discusses his 18-year tenure, the future of the university, and why he believes the next 100 years will be even more exciting than the past.

by Louise Ahern

{Eighteen years ago, you and your wife, Carol, visited the University of Redlands campus as you considered the presidency. What did you find here? What factors played a role in your decision to assume the helm of our liberal arts university?}

What drew me was the heritage of the university and, of course, we found pockets of strength.

I found a university with a very beautiful physical setting. I found a faculty dedicated to working with students and very passionate about teaching. I saw the potential of building around that great faculty to move an institution that was a hidden gem in the Inland Empire to a place that could have regional excellence and jump out into national visibility.

But I also found serious deferred maintenance issues and serious physical plant deficiencies. Cars were whizzing down Colton Avenue. The budget was seriously unbalanced, and 11 percent of the endowment was being spent on annual operations. The relationship between the faculty and the administration was not as strong as it could be.


It seemed like a great place to make something happen, a place that needed leadership and an administration that would work with faculty to create excellence. That was the challenge, the excitement.

{How did you tackle that challenge?}

I think an effective president helps to create vision and agendas, and I don't think a president can do that in a vacuum. One has to create the environment in which those agendas can be implemented and create the infrastructure that enables everyone to be successful. Building agendas and creating success for others are the two most essential ingredients in leadership, in my opinion.

So we started by building a better team. We reduced the turf battles and created an environment in which people began to think it was important to work together. There was a sense that everything we did should be done with quality. If we're going to do it, let's do it in the absolute best possible way.

It was a group process. I would come to the table with ideas, and in the same setting, we would seek the ideas of others. We all recognized the need to develop an environment in which we could work well together. It didn't happen overnight. I think we spent 18 months just learning how to talk to each other.



"Dr. Appleton is indeed a student-friendly president. He always has student groups over to his house and goes out of his way to be accessible and approachable. I remember my freshmen year when I played on the women's basketball team, Dr. Appleton would come to at least one practice a week. I thought it was so special that the university president took the time to not only attend practice but talk to the freshmen bench warmers. It is a true sign of leadership when you make a point to talk to all people not only the stars or most well known. This was my first experience of Dr. A, and it really showed me how much he cares about each student at an individual level." — Sherry Manning '05, ASUR President

“Perhaps the most visual sign of progress during Jim’s years here has been the transformation of the campus itself, with over \$160 million invested in the physical plant and technology infrastructure. This alone is an extraordinary achievement and contribution to the quality of the educational experience for both students and the faculty. Yet none of this would have been possible without the progress in internal restructuring and strategic development that has led to our place as a liberal arts university of distinction. Certainly this is one of Jim’s greatest contributions.”

*—Dick Fisher ’65, Chairman,
University of Redlands Board of Trustees*

Carol Appleton plans to spend more time in her art studio now.

{What would you say are the greatest successes of the past 18 years?}

The budget has been balanced for 16 straight years. Our endowment spending is under 5 percent. We’ve achieved over \$160 million worth of physical improvements; the curb appeal of the university is very good.

Our faculty was already very good, but today is across the board much stronger. We get as many as 200 applications for most vacancies. Why?

“Certainly we have gained immeasurably from these experiences and we’re glad they are not ending. The opportunity to contribute to something of great worth cannot be overstated and the sense of accomplishment has its own rewards.”

Because the average class size is 20, and this is an exciting environment in which to teach.

In 2000, we created two professional schools—the School of Business and the School of Education—out of a successful adult learning program called Whitehead College. We can now think seriously about AACSB accreditation for the School of Business, and our School of Education is a regional leader in teacher training and certification.

Our enrollment in the College of Arts and Sciences has grown—and that was intentional—and

so has our retention. Our athletic programs are strong and are an important part of our liberal arts curriculum.

We’ve established a partnership with ESRI, a software company based in Redlands that is the world-wide leader in developing Geographic Information Systems. Through that partnership, we are carving out a niche for ourselves in environmental studies, business and public policy by weaving GIS and spatial thinking into our curriculum.

Perhaps most importantly, people are treated with worth in our environment. All of us have a vision of a place that could be even better.

It might be a bit of a mythology when I hear others say that I’m this great fund raiser and that I’ve been primarily concerned about the development of the physical plant. These two are further down on my list of priorities as compared with building the infrastructure of a great university.

This has been an exciting part of being at the University of Redlands. We needed to be sharper



CARLOS PUMA



CARLOS PUMA

“But if I have to define legacy myself, I hope it will be said that I always treated people with worth, that we set clear and worthwhile agendas, and we got them done.”

in our visions, work harder in building agendas and build a team that can match any liberal arts university setting. That has been the most rewarding part of the job.

{On Oct. 2, the University of Redlands hosted a black-tie dinner on the Quad to kick-off the public phase of the \$100 million Centennial Campaign. In your speech that night, you described the university as being on an “upward trajectory.” What did you mean by that?}

There exists a sense of momentum and progress that won’t diminish.

We have established ourselves as a distinctive liberal arts university that combines the best of the liberal arts college tradition with selected professional and graduate experiences. We’re a

place that pushes the envelope on interdisciplinary studies and encourages a global perspective in much of the curriculum. The campus has a curb appeal that exudes the quality of the university itself.

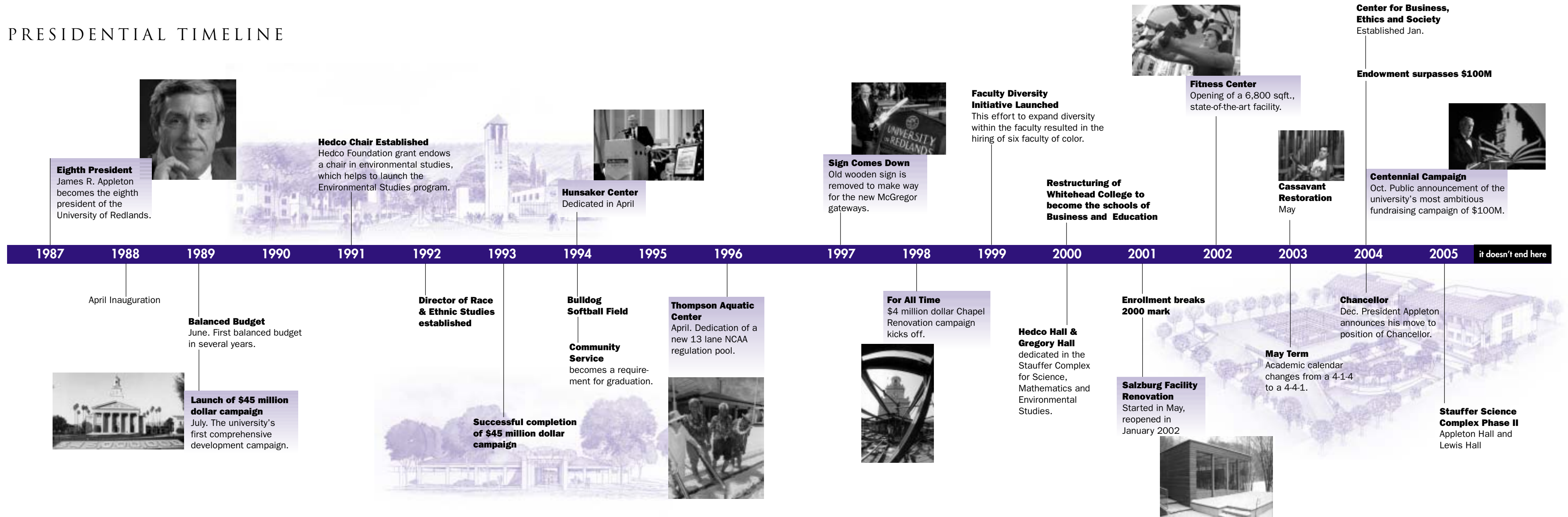
There is also a character to the place. I think some of this can be attributed to our history—the American Baptists and the value base they brought to the institution. We are, of course, more inclusive today. We are now a multi-faith and a more diverse environment, but I still believe that there is no such thing as a value-less education.

Our faculty is committed to our students in extraordinary ways and yet also has an agenda of scholarship that is for the most part fully linked with their teaching. We are entrepreneurial as

“The dramatic improvements to the campus are only the outward sign of what Jim Appleton has accomplished at Redlands. Quality of faculty, financial stability, thoughtful expansion and re-organization, athletics, liberating interdisciplinary programs, and on and on: in virtually every area of university life he has led the way. Perhaps as important as any of these, Jim has made the University of Redlands a more confident institution, able to celebrate what it does well and name without rancor what tasks remain. Redlands people now speak of the future as much as they do of present problems or disabling legacies: no small gift.”

—Professor of English, Bill McDonald

PRESIDENTIAL TIMELINE



“The time is right for a change. I think bringing a new president to the university prior to the Centennial Celebration in 2006-07 will allow that person to get acquainted with who we are and be in a position to help platform the institution into its second century.” —James R. Appleton

The Search for a New President

The university's board of trustees has employed the firm of Morris & Berger to conduct a search for the individual best qualified to become the institution's ninth president.

The firm will submit the credentials of qualified applicants to a search committee composed of members of the Board of Trustees, faculty, staff, the student body, and the Alumni Board of Directors. The committee is chaired by long-time trustee and attorney, H. Jess Senecal.

The search committee will make its recommendations to the University of Redlands Board of Trustees, which will select the next president of the university. The board of trustees hopes to complete the search process by late spring, 2005.

Presidential Search Committee:

- H. Jess Senecal '52 – Board of Trustees
- Nancy E. Carrick – Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Kimberly A. Cass – Associate Professor, School of Business
- Jan R. Cloyde – Board of Trustees
- Phillip L. Doolittle '76 – Senior Vice President for Finance and Administration
- Richard N. Fisher '65 – Chair, Board of Trustees
- Alice M. Greenthal '70 – Board of Trustees
- Jackie Graham – President, University of Redlands Staff Organization
- Richard C. Hunsaker '52 – Board of Trustees
- Jeff Martinez – Director of Physical Education and Athletics
- Sherry Manning – President, Associated Students of the University of Redlands
- Steven Morics – Associate Professor, Math and Computer Science
- Chad L. Norton '82 – Board of Trustees and President, Alumni Board of Directors
- Kathy Ogren – Director of the Johnston Center for Integrative Studies and Professor of History
- Keith Osajima – Professor, Race and Ethnic Studies
- Ronald C. Troupe '64 – Board of Trustees
- Steadman Upham '71 – Board of Trustees



President Appleton toured the U.S. Department of State with former Secretary of State Warren Christopher, a Redlands student during WWII.

illustrated by the Johnston Center and our strong moves to integrate spatial thinking into our curriculum. We are very collegial—just walk the campus and you’ll feel it. And don’t forget that we are well managed. But there is still much to do. We’re not yet finished on that upward path.

{What are some of things that must still be accomplished?}

Right now, we’re still too tuition-dependent. We must continue to grow our endowment. Endowment gives us stability, and the interest from our endowment can help fund financial aid

and faculty chairs. This leaves other funds available to provide a richer program on campus.

Theatre expansion and a new art complex will add to the science facility transformation, and renovation of several residence halls must be completed. AACSB accreditation is ahead for the School of Business. Campus life needs to be more fully integrated with our academic mission. And along the way we have more championships to win!

The next decade will be among the most exhilarating and challenging ever experienced by the University of Redlands.

{How important is The Centennial Campaign to the university’s future?}

It’s critical, and it’s not just about raising capital funds or program funds. It’s about endowment, which is critical for the next level of development at the university. Great liberal arts universities have significant endowments.

One of the distinctions of this university is that by the time students graduate, in excess of 50 percent of them have had experience in another country. We need to endow that program. We have musical programs, athletic teams

and debate squads that should travel and portray the university; we need to endow these.

Great faculty will be attracted and retained in the academy. It is a great honor for faculty to hold named endowed chairs, and we can use the interest from an endowment gift to support great faculty. In this campaign, we need to have 20 more endowed positions to retain the best of our faculty.

A centennial year gives us the opportunity to tell the world about the University of Redlands. It’s a chance to say, “Look at this university, a distinctive liberal arts university that now has a unique niche in higher education.”

As part of that conversation, the Centennial Campaign will make an enormous difference at the

“We have established ourselves as a distinctive liberal arts university that combines the best of the liberal arts college tradition with selected professional and graduate experiences.”

University of Redlands. With the commitment from our alumni and from our friends, there is no question in my mind that we will exceed \$100 million.

But it will take all of our alumni and the friends of our great university to make their commitment to this place. This is the time. We cannot delay. This is the epiphany moment.

{With so much momentum at the university today, why did you and Mrs. Appleton feel this was the right time to step down from the presidency?}

The time is right for a change. I think bringing a new president to the university prior to the Centennial Celebration in 2006-07 will allow that person to get acquainted with who we are and be in a position to help platform the institution into its second century. And I hope to be a help in that transition. The 18 years of my presidency have seen dramatic changes at this university, and now we’ll all help the new president set the next agendas.

Assuming the chancellorship will allow me to spend more time helping the university achieve the Centennial Campaign. Carol and I are not leaving Redlands. We will maintain our relationship with the university, because this has become our university.

{What do you hope your legacy will be?}

I’d rather have other people define my legacy. Frankly, though, I think one important measure of

my success will be to ensure the success of the next president.

But if I have to define legacy myself, I hope it will be said that I always treated people with worth, that we set clear and worthwhile agendas, and we got them done.

{What have your years at the University of Redlands given back to you and Carol?}

This has never been a job to me. I view it as a calling. Carol feels the same way.

I can never remember a day when I did not drive to the campus with the excitement of contributing to the long-term development of a distinctive liberal arts university. Other opportunities

came our way during the 18 years but none seemed more rewarding or more challenging.

Certainly we have gained immeasurably from these experiences and we’re glad they are not ending. The opportunity to contribute to something of great worth cannot be overstated and the sense of accomplishment has its own rewards.

Our life is rich and full. Trustees and fellow travelers have become friends, colleagues have been patient as we have learned from them, and just hanging out with students has enabled their enthusiasm and forward-looking gaze to rub off on us. Redlands also has provided a platform for me to extend my professional interests regionally and nationally.

We’re in an extremely important business—educating people for a future that they don’t know. To do that, we have to deal with critical thinking, more than the subject; we have to deal with values more than the content. We have to help students get to a place of making reasoned judgments for themselves and making commitments so they can make an impact on the world in which they are part, not just react to it.

That is a very important business. And to be a part of it is a privilege.

Oh yes, I also learned that it is best not to take yourself too seriously. **OT**

My appreciation of President Appleton’s leadership and commitment to issues of diversity was deepened last

June. While attending an evaluation seminar for diversity initiatives, I told people that I co-chair the

Coordinating Committee on Multicultural Affairs with President Appleton and that we have worked closely

together for ten years on a number of diversity initiatives. For me, this was not newsworthy, for I have come

to fully expect Jim’s willing involvement. You can imagine my interest when my colleagues told me story after

story of the resistance, indifference and difficulties they faced raising diversity issues administrators on

their campuses. Those stories helped me to realize how fortunate we have been at the University of Redlands to

have a president who is committed, in word and deed, to this issue of great importance in the 21st century.

— Professor of Race and Ethnic Studies, Keith Osajima