

Former Clemson President Lennon dies

Mike Eads

michael.eads@independentmail.com

Colleagues remembered former Clemson University President Max Lennon as a leader and a gentleman after hearing about his death Tuesday at age 76.

Almeda Jacks was tapped by Lennon in 1992 to be Clemson's vice president of student affairs, becoming the first woman to have such a senior position in the university's history. "Max was a gentleman and a great leader for Clemson,"

said Jacks, who left the university in 2006, then returned to take her old job again in 2014. "He was a first class guy all the way around."



Lennon was a 1960 graduate of Marble Hill College near Asheville, North Carolina, where he met his wife, Ruth. He went on to earn a bachelor's degree in animal science from North Carolina State University, where he later

obtained his doctorate. He taught and served in various administrative capacities at Texas Tech University, University of Missouri and Ohio State University before taking over Clemson in 1986.

Lennon was Clemson president from 1986 to 1994. His tenure was highlighted by the university's first large capital campaign, which raised \$101 million. He also oversaw the development of the Brooks Center, Sullivan Wellness Center, Garrison Arena, the Fluor Daniel Building and Clemson's partnership with the Greenville Hospital System.

"During Lennon's presidency, Clemson experienced unprecedented growth and success in research and private fundraising," said current President Jim Clements in an email to the campus. "The university's research expenditures quadrupled and academic fundraising more than tripled. Clemson also began and completed its first capital campaign during his tenure."

Jerry Reel, Clemson University Historian and former dean of undergraduate studies, said Lennon was a consensus builder who showed confidence in those people he tapped to help him run the university.

"He was very accessible," Reel said. "If I had a problem and needed to talk to him, I was in his office within two minutes even it meant having to rearrange his schedule."

Lennon's time at the helm was also marked with controversy, including the forced resignation of football coach Danny Ford in 1990 after the NCAA charged his program with 14 rules violations. Faculty members later grew disenchanted with Lennon after a costly contract buyout for Ford's successor, Ken Hatfield, as well as what many thought was overspending on administrators.

"They thought he spent too much on non-faculty people at the university," said Reel, who authored the official Clemson history, "The High Seminary."

[Former Mars Hill president has died](#)

Matters came to a head in February 1994, when Lennon learned that the Faculty Senate was planning a vote of no confidence in his leadership. Reel said Lennon had already thought of stepping down, for fear of overstaying his usefulness in the job.

When he learned of the impending vote, Lennon decided to head it off by announcing his resignation.



“He understood that he governed by having the confidence of people,” Reel recounted. “He decided there was no need to put Clemson through all of that.”

Former Milliken executive and Clemson alumnus Phil Prince was eventually hired by his colleagues on the university’s Board of Trustees to take over from Lennon. Prince overhauled much of the school’s academic and administrative structures, consolidating the nine colleges down to just four.

Two years after leaving Clemson, Lennon took over as President of his alma mater, now called Mars Hill University. He served there until 2002, when he

became president of the Education and Research Consortium of the Western Carolinas.

Funeral arrangements are not yet complete.

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