

Bassford leaves UFV legacy

When Dr. Skip Bassford agreed to take up the presidency of the University College of the Fraser Valley in 1998, it was because he was intrigued by a concept.

The university colleges of British Columbia were unique types of post-secondary institutions – ones that combined degree-level university studies with applied disciplines. This meant not only offering trades training, upgrading, and career programs as well as bachelor's degrees, but integrating an applied focus into the university programs.

When he left 11 years later, handing the presidency over to Dr. Mark Evered, it was as president of the University of the Fraser Valley.

The name may have changed, but Bassford hopes that his legacy will be that the focus has not: UFV still offers a unique and cutting-edge combination of applied and theoretical studies in a university environment.

"When I first came here, the group of university-college presidents was quite proud of the new type of education that we were forging, but we felt we needed a way to tell the world about the university-college model," he recalls. "It became clear, however, that people, especially those outside of British Columbia, just didn't 'get' the university-college name."

So the focus of his presidency changed from making the world understand the university-college model to achieving a name change for UCFV while keeping its applied, comprehensive, and regional focus.

So for at least six of his years as president, Bassford was a relentless campaigner for university status.

The 2005 provincial election came and went without the hoped-for university status. University colleges in Kamloops and Kelowna were changed into universities without a similar prize for the Fraser Valley.

Then, in 2006, the provincial government appointed former cabinet minister Geoff Plant to lead the Campus 2020 initiative, tasked with reviewing the post-secondary system and making recommendations about its future.

It took until the spring of 2008 for the provincial government to respond, when UCFV was the first of five institutions that Premier Gordon Campbell visited to hear univer-



Outgoing UFV president Dr. Skip Bassford

Canada-India Business and Economic Development, and a UFV centre in Chandigarh, India, which offers UFV's Bachelor of Business Administration to a cohort of Indian students.

"It's important that we look at the cultural fabric of our communities and ensure that what we're doing brings them into our embrace. That's why I'm proud to note that two days before I finish up here I'll be presiding over the signing of an agreement for a Mennonite Studies centre at UFV."

Then there was another project that required plenty of patience: procuring land at the former Canadian Forces Base Chilliwack, now the Canada Education Park, for a new UFV Chilliwack campus.

"That was a long hard process," Bassford recalls. "I believe that the new Canada Education Park will play a very significant role in our future."

UFV is now the largest landowner at the Canada Education Park and it opened its new Trades and Technology Centre there in 2008. It hopes to eventually relocate its entire Chilliwack campus to the CEP.

Another hallmark of Bassford's time at UFV is the sheer growth that the university has undergone – more than doubling in size since he took the helm. Much of that can be attributed to the burgeoning Fraser Valley population, making it hard to ignore the need for growth funding in this area, but it still required constant lobbying to achieve the

that teaching focus.

As he looks back on more than a decade at what started as the presidency of UCFV and ended as the top job at UFV, Bassford credits the legendary UFV culture with helping him to achieve much of what was accomplished during his time at the helm.

"The working climate here was wonderful. There was goodwill from the union, the administration, and the board. To be able to come to the end of one's career in a position of leadership in a significantly developing post-secondary institution was a very satisfying way to spend

11 years."

Bassford and his wife Jane Darville are moving to Toronto after he completes his term at UFV this month.

A bursary in their name has been established.

To contribute, contact the UFV development office at 604-854-4595 or giving@ufv.ca