

Dr. Burleigh C. Webb

The late Dr. Burleigh Carlyle Webb, 1923 - 1997, for whom B.C. Webb Hall is named, and who was often cited as playing a large role in shaping the history of North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University, served for 32 years as dean for what was then the School of Agriculture (now named the School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences). Webb was a native of Greensboro, North Carolina, and graduated from N.C. A&T in 1947.

He returned to his alma mater in 1959, initially serving as a research scientist in crop physiology and soil chemistry before being appointed in 1961 to serve as dean of the School of Agriculture. During Webb's tenure in this position, the first organized programs of federally funded agricultural research and Cooperative Extension were established, in cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture, and several new degree programs were established in food science, landscape architecture, agricultural economics, agribusiness and laboratory animal science. Prior to his tenure and during his early years as dean, the School of Agriculture mainly functioned to prepare agricultural educators for Cooperative Extension and vocational programs in high schools.

A Feb. 5 1992 Greensboro News & Record profile of Webb contains the following information about his early and middle years:

Webb was the youngest of four brothers, born to Haywood E. Webb Sr., a Guilford County agricultural extension agent, and Vina Watlington Webb, both of whom were college graduates. For a time, the family lived in Sedalia, and Burleigh Webb attended Palmer Institute, a private school whose legacy continues today as the Charlotte Hawkins Brown Historic Foundation, named for the school's founder.

After Webb earned his bachelor's in agriculture at A&T, he served 2 1/2 years with the Army in the European theater of World War II. After returning home, he earned his master's in agronomy from the University of Illinois in 1947, and his Ph.D in crop science from Michigan State University in 1951.

He then taught at Tuskegee University, and became chair of the agronomy department there. In 1959, he returned to A&T to teach chemistry, and two years later, was tapped to serve as acting dean, and then in 1962, as dean of the School of Agriculture. Webb worked successfully to expand the number and scope of academic programs, as well as to build a research program.

B.C. Webb Hall, which houses the Department of Animal Sciences, is a monument to one of his struggles, in which he attempted to land a veterinary science school for A&T. Although that program was ultimately awarded to N.C. State University, Webb succeeded in getting a laboratory animal science program which continues today, and is the first and only one of its kind in the state. He succeeded as well in obtaining the building to house this and other animal sciences programs.

Webb was married to Dr. Alfreda Webb, who had served as a member of the N.C. House of Representatives, and was coordinator of the laboratory animal sciences program.

Other documents from A&T's Bluford Library record that Webb also established the first campus-wide program of off-campus cooperative education, and in 1984, received the University's Administrator of the Year Award for Excellence. He was also the first inductee into the School of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences' Hall of Fame.

It was also during Webb's tenure that the 1890 community organized to successfully obtain the federal funds and some of the state matching funds that all land-grant universities are entitled to under the Morrill Act.

Prior to then, only 1862 universities were awarded these formula funds. Although this was a historic achievement that has resulted in significant scientific and educational advancement in the 1890 community, to this day, most of the 1890s, including N.C. A&T, continue the struggle to obtain the one-to-one state matching funds that are stipulated under the Morrill Act. (See <https://www.aplu.org/document.doc?id=4940>).