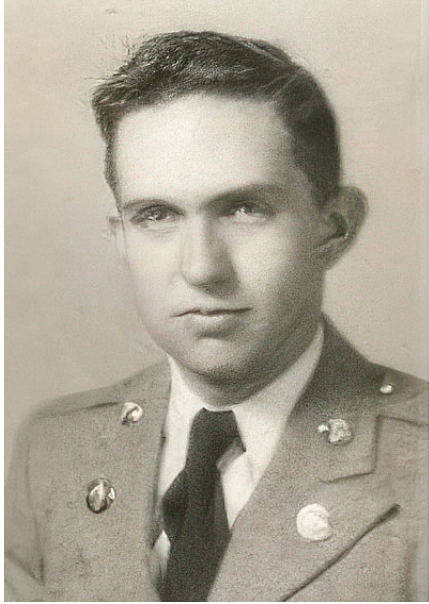




The Clemson Class of 1956

AND THE CREATION OF
THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS CENTER





Perry Sprawls, Clemson

B.S.'1956,
M.S.'61, PH.D.'68

The Class of 1956 Academic Success Center has deep roots from which it developed to become the major building and program on the Clemson campus today.

It was the experiences, both good and challenging, along with the traditions followed by a relatively small group of boys that arrived on the campus of the *Clemson College of Agriculture* in the Fall of 1952--mostly from the farms, but also the small towns and cities of South Carolina. The College was established to teach scientific agriculture and mechanical arts to South Carolinians and as a military school to provide educated and highly trained officers for the armed services. These boys were about to experience a major transition in their lives, from a civilian and free lifestyle of high school students to living in a highly regimented military organization and a very demanding and challenging academic program. They all came with the dream of getting a college education and a Clemson diploma. Many, perhaps most, were the first generation in their families with an opportunity to attend College. By State law, admission to Clemson was limited to white boys generally from South Carolina. Boys from other states could enroll by paying higher tuition, or often on football scholarships.

We arrived at Clemson on a hot September day with all our belongings in the required army style footlocker that had been carefully packed by our mothers. It did not include many clothes because we were to be issued military uniforms that would be our official dress for the next four years. The tuition for a semester was \$40 and living expenses was an additional \$230.90, which included housing, meals, laundry, healthcare, and recreational facilities. Also included was admission to all Clemson ballgames and on-campus concerts by nationally known performers including Roberta Peters, The Marine Band, the Robert Shaw Chorale, and the Philadelphia Orchestra.



As a military college, we lived as cadets in the very strict military organization, the Corps of Cadets. We were issued military rifles to be kept in a rack at the foot of our bunk, carried in drills twice a week and always subject to inspection for absolute cleanliness. Within the Corps of Cadets, the Company of about 120 cadets living together in the barracks became our new “family”.



Freshman Getting
Head Shaved

The day began at 6:30 AM with the Wake-Up Orderly checking to make sure we were awake, then getting fully dressed in the uniform of the day for the reveille formation at 7:00 and marching to breakfast. After a day attending classes, military formations, drills, marching to meals, and assigned seats at the table, it was into our rooms by 8:30 for studying until lights out at 10:00.

A long-standing Clemson tradition was that the first-year freshmen were designated as “Rats” and required to be attendees for the upperclassmen for the year. This included cleaning rooms and making up beds each morning, shining shoes, carrying, and returning laundry (6:30 AM laundry formation on Monday morning) and running errands for upperclassmen. Freshmen “Rats” were easy to identify because their heads were shaved, their first military haircut. Freshmen were confined to the Campus until the Clemson-Carolina football game that was always played in Columbia on “Big Thursday” in October. This was our first holiday and opportunity to return home and visit family and friends. Our only contact with anyone beyond the Campus was by mail. A highlight after dinner each day was going to the Post Office hoping for letters from family and girlfriends.



Assigned Seats for Meals

Along with the dramatic lifestyle change from the “freedom” of high-school boys to a highly restrictive military environment, it was the beginning of a new and demanding academic experience.

We were issued the Catalog, a large, printed book with “everything we would need to know,” from information on all courses and classes, each faculty member, and especially the many rules and regulations that we were to follow, including the demerits we would receive (that could lead to dismissal) for each infraction, including being late for a meal formation, not properly dressed, and dust found in rooms during Saturday morning inspections.

Students Tutoring Students



The Catalog included the statement: ***Since the opening of the college 30,660 students have attended Clemson and of this number 10,464 have been awarded the bachelor's degree.*** That is, **only a fraction** of those who first enrolled were to succeed, or “survive” the many challenges and difficulties that they were to encounter.

For us, the Class of 1956, 1,107 enrolled in 1952, only 653 returned to begin the sophomore year in 1953, and 479 graduated in 1956.

We were a privileged Class. Not only with an excellent education and a Clemson Diploma but also four years living in a military program that contributed to our development of self-discipline, maturity, responsibility, leadership skills, positive interpersonal relationships, and other valuable experiences that would enhance our lives forever.

The requirement for admission was a high school diploma but consideration would be given to students who had not graduated from High School under certain conditions. Upon arrival and before registering for classes all were give Placement Tests in English and Mathematics. Those--and there were many--who did not pass were required to enroll in non-credit Remedial Courses before enrolling in the freshman level courses in these subjects.

The challenge was entering college from a variety of high schools, often with marginal academic requirements for passing grades and graduation.

Not only for the freshmen, but also for sophomores, juniors, and seniors, there were courses, especially in math and the sciences, that resulted in low grades and many failures, including the failure to graduate. Back then, it was a common practice for professors to post the list of student grades outside their offices. It was almost a ritual to go by to see the number of failures in some courses, and especially by certain professors. When registering for some courses there was often an effort to avoid classes taught by certain “failing professors.” Summers provided the opportunity to enroll in certain courses at other colleges, where they could be passed, and transfer the credits back to Clemson.

Rats Early Morning Laundry Delivery for Upperclassmen



Formation to March to Meals

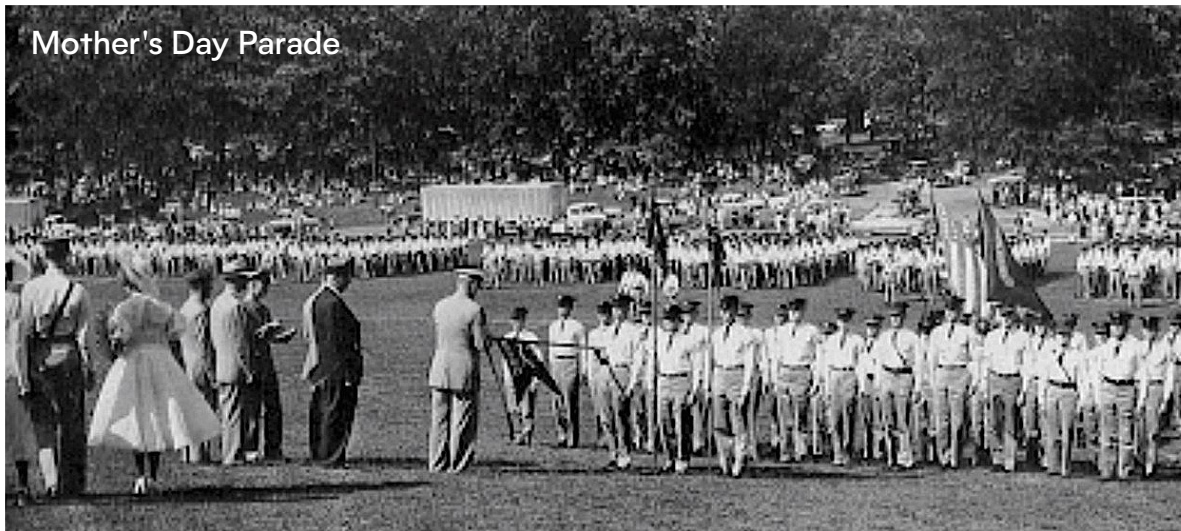


Saturday Morning Room Inspections

Typically, there were four of us living in each barracks room and a tradition was for our roommates to be referred to as our “Old Ladies.” Each room had one table shared by all and not a good study environment. At night, we could sign out from the barracks and go and sign in at the library that was generally a quieter study place.

Each of us was “on our own” to study and do homework with an occasional help from a classmate or upperclassman.

Each week, Saturday morning was the time for us and our rooms to be inspected by the Cadet Officers. It was a busy time for the Rats, cleaning the rooms and rifles and polishing the shoes for the upperclassmen and preparing their own rooms for inspection. Dust found anywhere in the room or on the rifles, resulted in demerits.



Mother's Day each year was a time for celebration.

A long-standing Clemson tradition was for families and girlfriends to come, often bringing picnic lunches, and we would present our major military parade of the year on Bowman Field.

It was a celebration, now just a few weeks from the end of the semester, summer break, and graduation for the Seniors who had successfully passed the required courses with the necessary grades.

In the year 1956 a total of 479 of us had “survived” or succeeded and graduated to become **The Class of 1956**. We left Clemson and went out into the ‘Big World’ with two prized possessions, A Clemson Diploma and a Commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the US Army or Air Force for those who had completed the advanced ROTC program.. We were off to our first professional work, perhaps as more educated farmers, textile manufacturing, engineers, etc., fulfilling military service obligations, settling down with families, and contributing to society and communities as individuals wherever we were. Occasionally for some, back to Clemson for small reunions or football games.

45 Years Later, BEGINNING A NEW PHASE

In 2001, 45 years after graduation, we came together again at Clemson for a reunion and to begin a new phase in the life of the Class of 1956. For 45 years we had been occupied with our individual careers and activities within communities, or even the world, hopefully helping and enriching the lives of others along the way. It was now a time to come together, as a class, bringing our experiences and resources developed over the 45 years and to do something for Clemson, recognizing it was our Clemson education and experiences that had made our life successes possible.

A long-standing Clemson tradition was that classes celebrate their 50th Graduation Anniversary by giving some significant project on the campus. A major purpose of the 45th Reunion was to make plans for the 50th Anniversary Project. To initiate the project The Class of '56 Golden Tiger Committee was created with Lynn Hendricks and Tom Shealy as Co-Chairs. The Committee consisted of 20 members representing a wide cross-section of the Class so that the various interests of the Class would be represented. The Committee then researched numerous projects suggested by the University Administration. It became clear during the discussions that the Class wanted to do something unique...especially something that would help students!

Our discussions included reflections on our time as students and especially the challenges we faced. This included memories of the 628 original classmates, (more than half of the class) friends, and often Old Ladies, who failed in completing their education and did not get a Clemson Diploma.

The Committee learned that Clemson had a small program, at that time called the Academic Support Center, that offered students some support services for select courses. There was no dedicated building for

the service and tutoring was conducted in various borrowed sites around campus. As the Center expanded, results indicated significantly improved academic performance by students participating in the various services. Also, there was a building and program known as Vickery Hall that provided academic support for athletes, especially football players. They were required to maintain good grades to continue their scholarships and remain on the team. In our discussions this concept began to form what is needed is a "Vickery Hall" for all students to help them in studying and maintaining good grades and becoming successful Clemson Graduates.

Clemson was very excited about expanding the support services for more courses and students and placed a high priority on constructing a building that would house the program, but funding from some source would be required to make the building a reality. The Committee chose this project as it was unique and would improve Clemson and would change the lives of many students for years into the future. This would be a big challenge for the small Class of 1956, but the Committee had faith that the classmates had big hearts full of positive memories of their "Clemson Experience". The Class of 1956 was required to provide \$2.7 million for the building to carry its name.

Now it was up to a relatively small class of graduates to provide \$2,700,000.00, something that no other class has ever come close to doing.

The Committee, representing the Class, was back at Clemson many times over the next 11 years developing plans and activities that would provide each member of the Class of 1956 an opportunity to express appreciation for their Clemson education by helping current students to also become Clemson Graduates.

Groundbreaking in 2008 and the Opening of the Class of 1956 Academic Success Center in 2012.



The first activity was reconnecting the Class in remembering and reflecting on our experiences at Clemson almost a half-century before. This included publishing special editions of The Tiger newsletter with stories from when we were students, production of CDs telling our story, and programs throughout the State.

It was recognized that it was to be our experiences, both good and challenging, that would be the motivation for supporting the development of the Academic Success Center.

With the wide range of financial resources among class members, a plan with different levels of participation was established. This provided an opportunity for class members to sponsor specific rooms and activities within the ASC building which could be identified by plaques on areas as you walked through the hallways. Some classmates sold property, others drew from their investments and savings to invest in more successful Clemson students. Many others, with more limited financial resources, participated as much as they could. All of these are recognized on the large plaque near the entrance to the ASC building and can be seen here.

From the initiation of the project in 2001 it was to be eleven years later, 2012, before it was to become a reality. It was over a decade of both challenges and successes. Within the Class we continued the development of the necessary

funds and reached the required amount to begin the construction celebrating with the Groundbreaking in 2008.

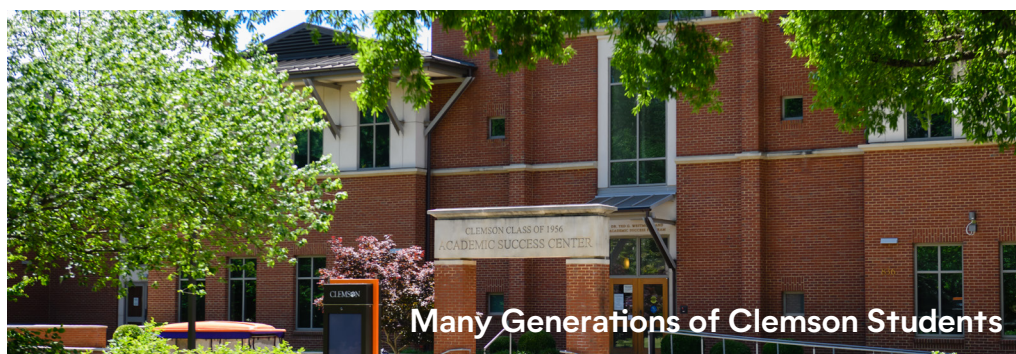
However, it was not without continuing challenges. The State of South Carolina was encountering financial shortfalls and reduced Clemson's budget, eliminating the funds that had been designated for the University's contribution to the construction of the Academic Success Center. President Jim Barker contacted the Class saying, "this is temporary" and encouraged us to keep the faith and continue with our efforts.

The purpose of the ASC building was to provide housing and facilities for a major, multi-functional academic success program that was being developed under the leadership of Dr. Elain Richardson, who was to become the director and continue the development into one of the nation's most comprehensive and effective support programs for Clemson Students.

It was not until 2012, eleven years after beginning the project, that it was success at last, with the official opening of the ASC when our Class came together again at Clemson, led by our Class President, John Blackmon, to join with students celebrating this major achievement that had been many years in the making and motivated by the experiences of a relatively small class of boys who enrolled in the Clemson Agricultural College 69 years before.

Young men and women enrolling in Clemson have a common dream: to obtain a higher education, and to become Clemson graduates. Along with the many opportunities that Clemson provides, there are challenges that we all encounter.

It was the many challenges and extensive failures encountered by the relatively small group of South Carolina boys enrolling in the Clemson Agricultural College in 1952 that planted the “seed” and provided the motivation for the creation and development of the **Class of 1956 Academic Success Center**.



To All Clemson Students,

One of our great privileges and opportunities in life was to attend and become graduates of Clemson many years ago. As we come together again at the Academic Success Center not only to reflect on when we were students, like you, but how our experiences many years ago have transcended over time and are contributing to successful academic outcomes for students today.

With Our Best Wishes for Your Success,
The Clemson Class of 1956



THE CLASS OF 1956

ACADEMIC SUCCESS CENTER BUILDING

DEDICATED APRIL 12, 2012

THIS BUILDING, DEDICATED TO THE ACADEMIC SUCCESS OF ALL CLEMSON STUDENTS, WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE MAJOR CONTRIBUTIONS BY OR IN MEMORY OF THE FOLLOWING MEMBERS, FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF THE CLASS OF 1956.



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