

James G. Martin is the twenty-sixth governor of North Carolina to whom this University has awarded an honorary degree. In his case, our salute is not to a political leader alone but also to one who was for many years a fellow academic.

Indeed, his contexts have been as much academic as political. Following his Georgia boyhood, he spent four years at Davidson college, where he earned a B.S. in 1957, and secured a Ph.D. from Princeton three years later. He then taught chemistry at his undergraduate alma mater for a dozen years. But increasing involvement in local government, particularly with the Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners (including two different periods as its chairman), propelled him into political candidacy, and in 1972 he was elected to the first of his six terms in the United States House of Representatives. There he served on the House Ways and Means Committee and the Budget Committee, and as chair of the Republican Task Force on Health and Environment. In 1984 he became the second member of his party to be elected governor of this State since 1896. His term in Raleigh has been marked by such human touches as filling in graciously as a last-minute substitute for Vice-President Bush at the dedication of our Walter Royal Davis Library a year ago April, and demonstrating to school children that there is nothing fearsome about either symphony orchestras or governmental leaders -- even (or especially) when playing the tuba, which he does with some proficiency.

This day of familial pride is a fitting occasion for our University family to confer on the governor of this state, from its flagship institution of learning, the tribute of the degree of Doctor of Laws.