

**2021 Distinguished Alumna and Alumnus Award Recipients**  
**University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill**

---

**Michele Gross Buck '87 MBA**

Michele Buck has more than three decades of experience as an accomplished and strategic business leader. She is currently president and chief executive officer of the Hershey Company, where she also serves as chairman of the board of directors. Ms. Buck has 30 years of consumer-packaged goods experience and a demonstrated track record of building iconic brands, strong teams and sustainable businesses.

As the company's first female CEO, Ms. Buck is responsible for Hershey's strategic direction, global operations and commercial activities. Prior to joining Hershey in 2005, she was an officer at Kraft and held various senior positions during her 17-year tenure there.

Ms. Buck serves as lead independent director on the Board at New York Life. In 2020, she was included on FORTUNE magazine's list of the 50 Most Powerful Women in Business.

A native of central Pennsylvania, Ms. Buck earned a bachelor's degree from Shippensburg University in 1982 and a Master of Business Administration from Kenan-Flagler Business School in 1987.

---

**Vincent L. Carter '99**

Vince Carter is a former professional basketball player and current analyst for ESPN. Mr. Carter was an eight-time All-Star in the NBA and a two-time All-NBA Team selection. He is the only player in NBA history to play 22 seasons over four decades, from his debut in 1999 to his retirement in 2020.

A high school McDonald's All-American, Mr. Carter played for three years with the Tar Heels and twice advanced to the Final Four of the NCAA Tournament. He was selected with the fifth overall pick in the 1998 draft by the Golden State Warriors. He was traded to the Toronto Raptors, where he emerged as a star, winning the 1999 NBA Rookie of the Year Award and the Slam Dunk Contest at the 2000 NBA All-Star Weekend. He represented the United States in the 2000 Summer Olympics, where the team won a gold medal. In 2004, Mr. Carter was traded to the New Jersey Nets, where he continued his offensive success. He also played for the Orlando Magic, Phoenix Suns, Dallas Mavericks, Memphis Grizzlies, Sacramento Kings and Atlanta Hawks. Mr. Carter received the Twyman-Stokes Teammate of the Year Award in 2016.

Off the court, Mr. Carter established the Embassy of Hope Foundation, assisting children and their families in Florida, New Jersey and Ontario. He was recognized in 2000 as Child Advocate of the Year by the Children's Home Society, and he received the Florida Governor's Points of Light award in 2007 for his philanthropy in his home state.

---

### **Estelle Louise Fletcher '57**

Louise Fletcher is an actress perhaps best known for her skillfully underplayed portrayal of the rigidly authoritarian Nurse Ratched in the 1975 film *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*, which earned her the Academy Award for best actress.

After earning a Bachelor of Arts from Carolina in 1957, Ms. Fletcher moved to Los Angeles to begin her acting career. She soon found work making guest appearances on such television shows as "Bat Masterson," "Maverick," "The Untouchables," and "Perry Mason." In 1963 Ms. Fletcher made her film debut in *A Gathering of Eagles*, though her role was uncredited. Soon after, she decided to retire from acting and devote herself to her family.

Several years later, director Robert Altman persuaded her to appear in his 1974 film *Thieves Like Us*. Her performance caught the attention of director Milos Forman, and he cast her as Nurse Ratched. In addition to winning an Oscar for the performance, she received a BAFTA award and a Golden Globe. Ms. Fletcher continued to appear in films and TV shows over the next decades, and in 1996 she was nominated for an Emmy Award for a guest appearance on the series "Picket Fences." Fletcher received a second Emmy nomination for a 2004 guest role on "Joan of Arcadia," and she later played recurring characters on "ER," "Heroes," "Private Practice," "Shameless," and "Girlboss."

In 2007 Ms. Fletcher was recognized by her alma mater with the PlayMakers Distinguished Achievement Award.

---

### **Rodney E. Hood '89**

Rodney Hood is the immediate past chairman and current board member of the National Credit Union Administration, the federal agency that regulates, charters and insures America's credit union system.

When Mr. Hood was named NCUA's 11th chairman in 2019, he was the first Black American to ever lead a banking regulatory agency. As chairman, Mr. Hood prioritized financial inclusion and wholeness, which he has called the civil rights issue of our time.

Previously, Mr. Hood served as a corporate responsibility manager for JPMorgan Chase, managing national partnerships with nonprofit organizations, financial regulators and community stakeholders to promote financial inclusion and shared prosperity in underserved communities. His prior experience includes serving as associate administrator of the Rural Housing Service at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In this role, he helped to address the housing needs in rural communities and administered the agency's \$43 billion mortgage portfolio.

Mr. Hood has generously shared his time and expertise with institutions of higher education in North Carolina, including service on the Board of Governors for the UNC System, the Board of

Visitors for UNC-Chapel Hill and the Board of Trustees for the UNC School of the Arts. He has also served on the Board of Trustees for the North Carolina Museum of Art.

A native of Charlotte, Mr. Hood holds a bachelor's degree from Carolina in business, communications and political science. While a student, Mr. Hood was a member of the Undergraduate Honor Court and was inducted into the Order of the Old Well.

---

### **Eugene Y. Lao '91**

Eugene Lao earned a Bachelor of Arts in psychology, global studies and East Asian studies from Carolina in 1991. He went on to earn a Juris Doctor and Master of Laws in international and comparative legal studies from Duke University School of Law.

Mr. Lao began his legal career as an associate with the Hong Kong office of Hunton & Williams, where he was part of the Project Development and Finance team, before being named Asia-Pacific regional general counsel at Yahoo!. He went on to hold deputy general counsel roles at Zynga, Ten-X (formerly known as Auction.com) and DocuSign before being named general counsel at Reltio. Currently, Mr. Lao serves as chief legal officer for Prime Core Technologies, Inc., which is headquartered in the San Francisco Bay area.

While at Carolina, Mr. Lao was a founder and president of the Asian Students Association and was recognized with the Chancellor's International Leadership Award. He was also a member of the UNC Honor Court and the Order of the Grail- Valkyries. In 2020, Mr. Lao was awarded the Alumni Diversity Award.

Mr. Lao is a member of Carolina's Alumni Committee on Racial & Ethnic Diversity and a Life Member of the Board of Directors of the General Alumni Association. He previously served on the UNC Global Advisory Board.

---

### **Norman E. Sharpless '88, '93 MD**

Not only did he receive two degrees from Carolina, but Ned Sharpless also worked at the University for many years. He came to UNC-Chapel Hill in 1984 as a Morehead Scholar and stayed to earn a medical degree with honors in 1993, followed by residency and a fellowship at Massachusetts General Hospital and the Dana Farber Cancer Center in Boston. He returned to UNC in 2002 as an assistant professor of medicine and genetics. By 2011 he was a full professor and received the title of Wellcome Distinguished Professor in Cancer Research. In 2014, he was named director of the UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center. Dr. Sharpless's time in academia was productive, as evidenced by his ten patents and numerous scholarly publications in scientific journals. All the while, he mentored many physician-scientists who have found success in both academia and industry.

In 2017, Dr. Sharpless was appointed to lead the National Cancer Institute at the National Institutes of Health. For a short time, he served as the acting commissioner for food and drugs at

the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. In both of these roles, Dr. Sharpless has worked tirelessly to promote public health and prevent cancer.

As leader of the National Cancer Institute, Dr. Sharpless developed a comprehensive plan aimed at accelerating therapies for childhood cancer, modernized NCI-supported clinical trials and developed research initiatives in many significant areas, including immunotherapy and global oncology. Throughout his long and exemplary career, Dr. Sharpless has consistently demonstrated extraordinary leadership and expertise.

---

### **John D. Swofford '71**

John Swofford, the longest-tenured commissioner in the 67-year history of the Atlantic Coast Conference, retired this June after 24 years of service. As the fourth commissioner of the ACC, Mr. Swofford guided the league to unprecedented stability, success and growth, expanding from nine to 15 members. Over the last 23 years, the ACC has been at the forefront of college athletics, winning 92 national team titles in 19 of the league's 27 sponsored sports. Beyond athletics, the league continues to set the standard academically by leading all conferences in nearly every comparison.

A native of North Wilkesboro, Mr. Swofford attended UNC-Chapel Hill on a Morehead Scholarship as part of head coach Bill Dooley's first football recruiting class. In 1980, at the age of 31, Mr. Swofford was named Carolina's athletics director, a post he held for 17 years. During his tenure, the Tar Heels won more ACC and NCAA championships than under any other athletic director in ACC history, a record that still stands. In 1994, Carolina won the Sears Director's Cup, awarded to the top overall athletics program in the nation, the only ACC program to ever win that award.

Mr. Swofford is a member of five Halls of Fame: the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics Hall of Fame, North Carolina Sports Hall of Fame, North Carolina High School Athletic Association Hall of Fame, Chick-fil-A Bowl Hall of Fame and Wilkes County Hall of Fame. He holds a master's degree in athletics administration from Ohio University.

---

### **Julian D. Wiles Jr. '76 MFA**

Julian Wiles has had an extensive and meaningful career in theater as a playwright, director, designer and advocate. In 1978 he founded Charleston Stage, which became the resident company of the Historic Dock Street Theatre. Charleston Stage has grown into one of the region's largest and most respected arts institutions and includes an education program that reaches over 25,000 young people annually.

Mr. Wiles grew up on a farm in South Carolina and earned his undergraduate degree from the College of Charleston. He came to UNC-Chapel Hill to study theatrical design, receiving a Master of Fine Arts in dramatic art in 1976.

Over the course of his career, Mr. Wiles has designed, directed and produced over 300 plays and musicals for Charleston Stage. He has written 34 original plays, musicals and stage adaptations, eight of which are licensed by Dramatic Publishing. More than 100 productions of his published works have been performed across the country and internationally. Many celebrate South Carolina's rich cultural history, including the musical *Gershwin at Folly*, which explores how George Gershwin's 1934 trip to Charleston influenced *Porgy and Bess*; *The Seat of Justice*, which chronicles South Carolina's pivotal role in the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision; and *Denmark Vesey: Insurrection*, focused on the alleged 1819 Charleston slave rebellion.

Mr. Wiles has received the National Youth Theatre Director's Award, Charleston's NAACP Special Recognition Award and South Carolina's Governor's Award for the Arts. He is a member of the South Carolina Theatre Association's Hall of Fame.