

Dave Owens and Carolina North: The Glue

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David Owens

An article in the most recent issue of the *University Gazette* describes the approval of a 20-year development agreement between the University and the Town of Chapel Hill for Carolina North. The *Gazette* describes the process as “nearly two decades of off-and-on again planning and an intense 10-month period of almost continual staff work, ongoing public dialogue and monthly negotiations between trustees and council members.” Chancellor Thorp called the agreement “[s]urreal and wonderful.” Getting to this point on Carolina North may be one of the most important, challenging, and contentious town-gown issues in the history of Carolina.

It would not have happened without the remarkable work of Dave Owens. “[T]he man singled out universally as the glue that helped hold the negotiations together was David Owens, a professor in the School of Government. He was engaged by the town to provide technical advice and to guide the negotiations. At the end of the trustees meeting, [Roger] Perry commended Owens as someone ‘uniquely and totally trusted by both sides.’” Perry has just finished serving as chair of the board of trustees. According to him, “Dr. Owens has proved that his level of integrity is matched only by his skill and his acumen in helping us craft and develop this agreement.”

I ran into Jack Evans, executive director for Carolina North, at a reception the day after the agreement was adopted by the Town Council. He pulled me aside and said: “Let me give you four reasons why Dave Owens was absolutely critical to the success of this process.” After ten minutes he stopped talking—he ended by saying, “I really mean it.” Roger Stancil, Chapel Hill Town Manager, left me a voicemail message earlier today that said: “Call me. I want to tell you something good.” I returned the call and Roger proceeded to talk at length about the amazing role that Dave had played in the Carolina North process.



A couple of weeks ago I had lunch with Roger Perry to talk about something that had nothing to do with Carolina North. He immediately launched into a description of Dave's good work with the Town and the University. Then he stopped and said: "But that's what your people do all the time in their different areas, isn't it?" Absolutely right. Congratulations to Dave for his good work under extremely difficult circumstances, and for reminding lots of folks on campus and in the community about the value of the School.