



# VIEW*S* & VISIONS

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## Change as Challenge: How to Move a University

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WVU Tech Campus President Carolyn Long has spent her career serving as an educator and administrator in the West Virginia public school and higher education systems. She worked as an elementary school teacher, spent 10 years as principal of Little Birch Elementary School and served as the first female superintendent of Braxton County Schools. In her eight years of service, she balanced the school system's budget, received more than \$12 million in grants and led the successful efforts of the County Board of Education in passing a \$17 million bond to update schools throughout the county.

Long accepted a position on the West Virginia University Board of Governors in 2007 and served as the first female chairperson of the Board from 2008-2011. In December 2011, she agreed to lead WVU Tech during a time of revitalization and transition. Under her leadership, WVU Tech is making tremendous progress, including increased enrollment and a historic transition to a new campus in Beckley.

Long holds a bachelor of arts degree in elementary education from Fairmont State College and a master's degree in educational administration from the West Virginia University College of Graduate Studies.

If you've read news about higher education in West Virginia in the last year, you're aware that WVU Tech is in the process of relocating to Beckley.

While a move seems simple on the face of it, what we're dealing with is more than an update to our mailing address. We're moving an entire university from its home of more than 120 years. We're doing this while honoring the institution's legacies and making plans for its future. That's no small feat, and if you're looking for an environment of change, there are few more potent ways to find it.

Our kind of move is rare. Our timeline? Even more so. Back in 1951, Wake Forest University announced that the institution would relocate from the small town of its namesake to Winston-Salem, more than 100 miles to the west. It would take the college more than half a decade to complete the endeavor. Our transition will flow from announcement to completion in less than two years. In the education world, that's the blink of an eye.

WVU Tech's move doesn't end there. Beyond our campus transition, we have spent the last two years moving into system-wide brand standards, which inform everything from the way we recruit to the look and feel of campus. We're launching a new series of websites. And, like the rest of the higher education world, we're facing a new breed of prospective students – Generation Z kids – who are shaking up the way we view the overall college experience.

This year truly is a season of change.



### Dealing with Change in the Space Between Points A and B

We're in the middle of some big, disruptive changes. Even so, we're in great shape. Why? Because we started this journey with a same-page mindset. From the students in our labs to the community members who live and work alongside us, we've worked very hard to make sure everyone impacted by our move is part of and informed about the process.

Internally, we're introducing change by degrees so that people are ready to adapt. We've taken to change with a positive mindset. We're leaving old, bad habits behind. We're using the move as a reset, looking at better ways to handle everything from campus mail and parking to how we connect with the rest of the world. By tackling this transition with a spirit of opportunity and renewal, we stop worrying about how we'll handle day-to-day change and start focusing on making our situation better. It turns this big, disruptive change from something to fret over into a productive challenge that we can celebrate.

We're also finding success by making sure our information loops are big enough to hold everyone impacted. We've been in contact as often as possible, updating employees, students and community members on our plans and progress. We're sending out regular employee emails with tips for managing change. We're bringing in change experts to host workshops and seminars.



*The WVU Tech campus's transition to Beckley, West Virginia will be completed by the start of the Fall 2017 semester*

Our external communities are involved, too. To ensure that Montgomery and the surrounding area are not swept up in our change, WVU and WVU Tech representatives have been working with municipal stakeholders, economic development organizations and community groups to ensure that our transition does not leave a gap in that community. Instead, we're helping to draw in funding for development projects and assisting local leaders as they plot out new plans for economic growth. In Beckley, we're working with the city and with regional commerce organizations to lay the groundwork for fruitful partnerships within the community.

Instead of simply packing up and moving from one place to another, we're working on ways to build up our people in both locations. We're giving our stakeholders a steady stream of tools to use as they navigate this new terrain. The result? Our campus transition is one of the smoothest and most energizing transformations I've seen in my career in education.

### **Still a Lot of Tomorrows Ahead**

Our move isn't over yet, though it's on schedule and looking great. There's still much to do in the weeks and months ahead. There's more change on the horizon, but I know that in all of this, our Golden Bear family will thrive.

Truly transformational change, I've learned, does not depend solely on laser-like focus or how neatly your ducks are laid in a row – although those aspects of readiness play an important role. It also requires taking an honest, unabashed look at where you are, why you're doing what you do and how those things can be made better in the fire of change. With a determined spirit and that unflinching examination of who we are and who we want to be, we have prepared ourselves to face whatever lies ahead – not as a challenge, but as an opportunity to make WVU Tech better than it was the day before. ▾