

President James F. Barker: Building a Future for Clemson

Clemson University's 14th president, James F. Barker, is first and foremost an architect. He came to the office with a clear blueprint of Clemson's future in mind – to become one of the nation's top public universities. To achieve this vision, Barker led the development of 10-year goals and an action plan built around collaboration, focus, relevance and academic quality.

The results speak for themselves: Today, Clemson is considered an academic rising star, more than doubling research in just three years, launching major new economic development initiatives, dramatically increasing the quality of the student body, and rising to a #27 ranking among the nation's top public universities. For his leadership, Barker has been honored with the Buck Mickel Award for Business and Community Leadership by the Greater Greenville Chamber of Commerce, the Anderson Independent-Mail's Pointing the Way Leadership Award, Greenville Magazine's The Cliffs Business Person of the Year Award, and the Order of the Palmetto – the state's highest civilian honor. He also was inducted into the Boys and Girls Clubs Hall of Fame.

Barker has emerged as a national leader in academic and public service arenas. He currently serves on the NCAA Board of Directors, chairing the Division I Committee, and is past president of the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the region's accrediting agency, which recently honored him with the James F. Rogers Meritorious Service Award. He was awarded the Executive Leadership Award from the Council for Advancement and Support of Education District III and has been awarded honorary doctoral degrees from S.C. State University and Mars Hill College. He also has served on the Truman Scholars selection committee, was a Cambridge University Visiting Scholar, and is a member of the Shaw Group Board of Directors, serving on the Audit Committee.

Barker is a recipient of the National Distinguished Professor Award of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture and served as president of that association. He was named Fellow of the American Institute of Architects and has also been a partner in an architectural practice.

As President, Barker remains committed to the classroom. Each spring, he is part of a team that teaches an undergraduate course exploring “a sense of place” in architecture, literature and history.

Barker, a native of Kingsport, Tennessee, earned his bachelor of architecture degree from Clemson in 1970 and his master of architecture and urban design degree from Washington University in St. Louis in 1973. He and his wife, Marcia, have a son and daughter-in-law, Jacob and Rita Bolt Barker, and another son, Britt.