



3240 Fort Road • Toppenish, WA 98948
(509) 865-8500

Date: August 19, 2016

Contact: David Mance, Media Relations Coordinator
509-865-0731 or mance_d@heritage.edu

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Heritage University President John Bassett Announces Plans to Retire

Toppenish, Wash. – Heritage University President John Bassett announced to faculty, staff and students his plan to retire at the conclusion of the 2016-17 academic year.

"My six years at Heritage have been the most rewarding of my career". We have accomplished so much together – creating new programs, improving academic rigor of all academic programs, building five new campus buildings and developing a leadership team that is equipped to steward the university both now and in the future. I could not be more proud of where Heritage is and more excited for its future" said Bassett at the All University Day meeting on Friday, August 19th.

Bassett, only the second president in the University's 34 year history, stated that as rewarding as his work at Heritage is, the pull of his children and grandchildren, who live in the Midwest, was just too strong.

"When you have your first grandchild at age 70 you want to spend as much time as possible with them as you can since you don't know how much time you'll have with them" quipped Bassett who turns 75 next year.

Rick Pinnell, Chairman of the Heritage University Board of Directors, praised the many accomplishments Bassett achieved during his tenure.

"I have often said that there was no person better than John to take Heritage from adolescence to adulthood. Heritage took a quantum leap forward under John's leadership. Speaking for the board of directors we could not be more grateful for his stewardship of this true gem that is Heritage. All of us in The Valley hold our heads high knowing we have Heritage in our midst, and thanks to John's leadership the university is poised for an even brighter future."

Under Bassett's leadership, the university established an array of new degree programs in response to the needs of students and The Valley including: Master of Science in Physician Assistant, the Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Master of Arts in Medical Science, a program in Early Childhood Education and a Pre engineering program in articulation with WSU Tri Cities and Saint Martin's University. He also established University centers to act as resources for The Valley including: the Center for a New Washington and the Center for Native Health and Culture. Additionally Bassett led the university in its recovery from a devastating fire, in

2012, which destroyed its original campus building, Petrie Hall (the former McKinley School), through the development of a new campus master plan and two phases of construction that yielded five new campus buildings needed to support the growing student body and expanded academic program needs. Two buildings completed in the second phase of construction will be dedicated on Thursday, September 15th.

While the desire to spend as much time with his grandchildren is strong, Bassett is committed to staying at the University while the board searches for his replacement. The board will begin its search in earnest immediately according to Pinnell.

"Filling John's shoes will not be easy" said Pinnell, "But just as we thought there was no way to replace Sister Kathleen Ross, the founding president, the amazing story that is Heritage and the profound mission of Heritage intercedes for us and allows candidates to emerge that otherwise might not consider a small liberal arts university located in the middle of a hop field."

President Bassett also stated that in his final year he will also focus on ensuring that Heritage has the financial resources that are critical to funding student scholarships. "Gifts from individual donors and foundations have been the lifeblood of this institution from its very conception. Heritage is a special place and our students are wonderfully talented and determined though they often lack the financial resources necessary to attend college. Our generous donors understand that and have transformed the lives of thousands of people with their gifts. In this final year in particular I will be working to cement that future for students who will enroll here long after I have gone."

Plans for official farewell events will be forthcoming once an official transition plan to the new president is known, most likely in the spring or early summer of 2017.

More about President Bassett

John Bassett, Ph.D., is a scholar, author, professor of American literature, and the second president of Heritage University. He took office in July 2010 after a long and distinguished career in academia. Here, he strives to maintain the university's core values and mission while raising quality, creating higher expectations for all, and re-branding the school as one where all students from the Yakima Valley will find a high quality education.

Bassett has lead the university through the expansion of its campus, to include the construction of three new permanent facilities, with two additional buildings opening in the fall 2016. He opened three university research centers: The Center for a New Washington, the Center for Native Health and Culture and the Heritage University Language Center. He has led the university through the expansion of its academic offerings to include two robust master's degree programs in the health sciences (Master of Arts in Medical Sciences and Master of Science in Physician Assistant), and undergraduate programs in environmental sciences and studies, early childhood studies, pre-engineering, medical sciences, as well as the establishment of a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree program. Additionally, he

raised the number of Ph.D. level full-time faculty to the highest it has been since the university's founding.

Bassett has been active nationally, serving on multiple higher education boards and committees. He served as the 2010-11 Chair of the NAICU Board of Directors, and worked tirelessly as a member of its Accountability Committee. He also served as the 2014 board chair of the Council for Higher Education Accreditation and served three years on the Commission on Advancement of Racial and Ethnic Equity for American Council on Education.

As a member of the Association of American Colleges and Universities' President's Trust, Bassett was at the forefront of a movement among higher education leaders who advocated for a strong liberal education. The President's Trust endeavored to offer students "significantly expanded economic opportunities, while also fostering intellectual resilience, civic capacity and knowledge of the wider world."

In 2016, Bassett was recognized for his lifetime of achievements by the National Association of Independent College and Universities. He was awarded the 30th Annual Henry Paley Memorial Award, which recognizes an individual who embodies his spirit of unfailing service toward the students and faculty of independent higher education. The recipients of this award have set an example for all who would seek to advance educational opportunity in the United States.

Prior to taking the presidency at Heritage, Bassett served as the president of Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts. There, he oversaw significant improvements to academic quality, campus infrastructure, fundraising and strategic planning, including upgrades in information technology and alumni programs, recruiting 83 new faculty members, surpassing a \$100 million capital campaign goal by \$6 million, building a new science facility, and renovating several other key buildings on campus. He also oversaw the university's partnership with the innovative University Park Campus School, a small urban public school for low income students (grades 7 through 12) that was recognized as one of the 100 best public high schools in the country. Through the University Park Partnership and the Jacob Hiatt Center for Urban Education, Clark demonstrated that a high quality liberal arts research university can extend its resources outward in ways to improve both a city and a college, and to develop a brand attractive to hundreds of perspective students each year.

Prior to his service at Clark, Bassett was the founding Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU), bringing together the sciences, social sciences, humanities and arts into a single college. Previously, the center of the university consisted of its professional schools with the basic arts and sciences relegated to a secondary role. In addition to bringing a planned \$50 million campaign home at \$93 million, he succeeded in making the new college recognized as a very important core part of CWRU.

Bassett earned a Ph.D. in English from the University of Rochester and completed master's and bachelor's degrees at Ohio Wesleyan University. He spent 14 years

teaching and researching American Literature on the faculty at Wayne State University before becoming Head of the Department of English at North Carolina State University from 1984 to 1993. His eleven books and more than 30 articles include contributions to the understanding of William Faulkner, Sherwood Anderson, Mark Twain, Southern Writers and the Harlem Renaissance.

For more information, contact David Mance (509) 865-0731
mance_d@heritage.edu.

#

Heritage University is a non-profit, independent, regionally accredited institution of higher education offering undergraduate and graduate education across the state of Washington. Visit our website, www.heritage.edu.