

Building lifelong relationships

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Campaign for the UNIVERSITY of NORTH FLORIDA

Endowment
Report '10 -'11





Jacksonville business executive Chuck Ged (left) was a student in the classes of retired UNF faculty member Ray Bowman. The two have become friends and partners in the creation of the UNF Environmental Center.

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The friendship between successful Jacksonville business owner Chuck Ged and retired University of North Florida faculty member Ray Bowman might be one of the best examples of how a student-teacher relationship can blossom into something much more meaningful. Through mutual respect and a sense of civic responsibility, the two have become friends and partners in an important University initiative.

Ged was once one of Bowman’s students. He recalled being so impressed by the faculty member that he still has his notes from one of Bowman’s chemistry classes. After graduation, Ged went on to start his own business, Advanced

Environmental Laboratories of Jacksonville, which has become one of the preeminent labs in Florida. When Bowman retired after 36 years of teaching, Ged returned the favor by helping his mentor realize his long-held dream of establishing the Environmental Center on campus.

But the relationship goes beyond just a former student who is grateful to a former faculty member. It shows how students can become influential members of the community while giving back to the University.

The long relationship has extensive roots. When Ged was a student, Bowman recalled his student’s superior ability to absorb material. That’s because Ged found UNF to be an

excellent learning environment. He admitted he struggled with his initial college experience at the University of Florida because of the relative size of the institution. But that wasn’t an issue when he transferred to UNF.

After graduation, Ged was hired by JEA to work in the utility’s environmental lab. Bowman asked his former student to return to campus and teach a lab class.

The relationship continued to mature as Ged established his own business and began to hire UNF interns, providing the same type of individualized attention he had experienced through Bowman’s classes.

The business has continued to expand and today boasts 96 employees across six different offices in Florida.

The success of the business also marked the start of Ged’s philanthropic initiatives.

“Even when I was there in the ‘80s, Ray had a vision for a center devoted to the environment,” Ged said. “Upon his retirement from UNF, a suggestion was made about an endowment for such a center, and I was glad to help out.”

Not only was Ged a charter corporate sponsor for the UNF Environmental Center, but he also funded a scholarship and made a major gift for the advanced analytical chemistry lab in the new Science and Engineering Building.

Much of this philanthropy was motivated by Ged’s desire to give back for what he had received at UNF.

“Ray was always willing to take the time for students,” he said. “You could go to him to talk about a class topic or career plans. He loved the student-teacher relationships.”

Bowman feels similarly.

“The reason I came to UNF was the ability to spend quality time with students,” he said. “I must say it was very rewarding when you had a chance to interact with a student and give direction to their career.”



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Bowman also underscores the importance of endowments to University operations like the Environmental Center.

“An endowment allows the center to do things that the University might not have been able to afford,” he said.

One example he cited was the recent St. Johns River Report done by the Environmental Center in cooperation with Jacksonville University.

“Endowments ensure continuity of funding so the Environmental Center can continue its work for years into the future,” he said.

This explains why Ged and Bowman will always have two words in common as the foundation of their friendship — thank you.