

# EDUCATION IS NEXT

— **Dr. Earl Brooks**  
TRINE UNIVERSITY



WHEN DR. EARL D. BROOKS, II, STARTED HIS ACADEMIC JOURNEY IN HIGHER EDUCATION, HE WAS A TEACHING ASSISTANT AT LINCOLN MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY IN EAST TENNESSEE. WHILE COMPLETING A PH.D. AND PLANNING FOR A REWARDING CAREER IN RESEARCH, HE DISCOVERED HIS TRUE PASSION – HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP.



"The more I was in the classroom, the more I loved it," says Earl D. Brooks, II, Ph.D., recently retired President, Trine University. "Over time, I moved from classroom professor to Academic Department Chair, Dean, and Vice President." In these academic leadership roles, Dr. Brooks realized how development and advancement efforts could expand programs, laboratories, and facilities across the university. His dedication to that work led to the position of Chief Operating Officer, then to a similar position at Wesley College in Delaware.

Dr. Brooks says at Trine University, he "saw opportunities that could build on the strong base already established. I was impressed with the university's culture, its ability to attract students and leadership, and its Board of Trustees. I felt I could make an impact there."

In January 2000, Dr. Brooks was elected 16th President of Trine University (then Tri-State University). At the time, he was 44 years old and the youngest university president in the state of Indiana. On May 31, 2023, he retired after 23 years in the position. On his first day as President, Dr. Brooks says he had a list of 16 opportunities that could transform the university for the future. "I believed in taking an unconventional, nontraditional, and transformational approach to higher education," he says. "I wanted Trine University to even better serve students, offer the best residential experience possible, and ensure preparation for the real world of work."

Under Dr. Brooks' leadership, Trine University completed a strategic name change, transitioned from undergraduate to graduate and doctorate degree status, and added numerous fields of study, including many in Health Professions and Health Sciences. Today, the University boasts nearly 10,000 national and international students and has awarded more than 40,000 degrees.

"I have always been open to change, and I believe in taking calculated risks," Dr. Brooks says. "But, it was not about the number of academic programs the University could offer, it was about the quality of the programs and the ability to provide career outcomes and pathways for students." When the Class of 2022 graduated, 99.3% of the graduates were employed or in graduate school within six months of graduation. "Commencement was always a great day for me, seeing successful graduates," Dr. Brooks says. "Even as the pace of growth at Trine University continued while I was there, we did not sacrifice the ability to offer small school attention and feel."

Dr. Brooks guided Trine University through more than \$300 million in campus improvements, including renovating existing and developing new facilities. The University's net assets grew from \$25 million to \$198 million and its regional economic impact rose from \$35 million to \$175 million.

"I enjoyed what I did at Trine, yet no one person could have accomplished it alone. I was surrounded by a strong team of people who each believed in the University's vision and mission for student success," Dr. Brooks says. "Together, we focused on making a difference in students' lives, supporting families, and contributing to economic development as we also taught students to lead, succeed, and serve others."

