

## The Future of Willamette: Looking Forward in Salem

*Before there was Oregon, before there was Salem, there was Willamette University*

When Willamette was founded in 1842, the cities of Salem, Portland, Seattle and Tacoma did not exist.

Willamette University is closely associated with the beginning of law and government in the historical Oregon Territory, which now comprises Oregon, Washington, Idaho and parts of Montana and Wyoming. Willamette University housed the first session of the state legislature to meet in Salem and sheltered the first court in the territory under United States auspices. It educated many of the Northwest's first leaders, artists and business people. Willamette established the first law school (1883) and the first school of medicine (1866) in the Pacific Northwest, which later merged with the medical school of the University of Oregon.

Salem's residential institution of higher learning has earned a national reputation for its academic standards and exemplary citizenship, values that have defined the culture of this campus for more than 166 years.

In Oregon's infancy, Willamette University deeded to the new state the very land upon which the Capitol was erected. The city of Salem literally sprang up around Willamette's campus to become the capital city it is today. In fact, much of the present downtown is built on former University land. There is a page on the University's web site titled Salem, Our Community and in the upper right hand corner it reads Willamette 'red hearts' Salem.

The histories of the City of Salem and Willamette University have always been entwined and so will be our futures. Willamette University is an integral part of the Salem community, and its growth and change affect us all. Continually moving forward, where will it take our community and how will we get there?

Our very special speaker is Willamette's 22<sup>nd</sup> president, Dr. M. Lee Pelton. Under his leadership, the University has increased its academic profile, successfully employing strategies to attract the best faculty and the brightest students from the state, the nation and the world. During President Pelton's tenure, College of Liberal Arts applications have quadrupled .

Other advancements under his direction include: the Hallie Ford Museum; the College of Law Carnegie Building, which houses the Oregon Civic Justice Center; the establishment of the Center for Ancient Studies and Archaeology, the Center for Asian Studies, the Center for the Study of Democracy, Religion, and Law, and the Center for Sustainable Communities; and *The Campaign for Willamette*, a \$125 million fundraising effort that surpassed its goal in early 2009 to raise \$130.6 million.

President Pelton holds a doctorate from Harvard University and an undergraduate degree in English and psychology from Wichita State University, where he graduated magna cum laude in 1974. His area of academic focus is in 19th century British prose and poetry. Dr. Pelton is a recognized leader in higher education and has lectured and written extensively on the topic. He has served as a member of several leading national educational boards and committees.

