

He'll keep his eyes on the sky

Powell retires from UWG after 50 years

BY ERIN MCSWAIN-DAVIS
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Dr. Bob Powell retired from the University of West Georgia Friday after a half-century of teaching, but his impact on education is expected to last far into the future.

Powell was a professor of physics and the director for the UWG Observatory and taught thousands of students to look up to the stars and dream.

"Because of the many of the students that I have interacted with as a teacher, I do feel that I have made an impact," Powell said. "The most recent ones will continue to make impacts for the next 20 to 30 years. It is a larger legacy than just what my direct contact with students will be."

UWG Observatory Associate Director Ben Jenkins said Powell will be remembered for pushing his students to succeed.



Jessica Gallagher/Times-Georgian

University of West Georgia President Dr. Kyle Marrero, left, speaks to Dr. Bob Powell on Friday at Powell's retirement party.

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"As a former student of his and a co-worker and now a friend of his, as he goes into retirement, really the thing that I believe he made the most impact with is the number of different students he has instructed, taught and had a personal connection with," Jenkins said. "He has always been pushing to have as many students under him as possible on different things and exposing them to different aspects of physics but also astronomy."

UWG President Dr. Kyle Marrero said it will be impossible for someone to fill Powell's shoes in so many ways, because he has impacted so many lives, decades and generations.

"He has left a legacy for this institution, now and for the future," said Marrero. "Clearly, looking up to the stars is a part

of what Dr. Powell will want us to do, and that is what he has provided to us so that we can look forward to the future."

Dr. Julie Talbot, associate professor and chair of the Physics Department, said that Powell's 50 years at the university have touched thousands of students' lives and at least a hundred teachers who learned from him as students and are now teaching others.

"He is big on outreach to the community so he was the one who got the money to build the observatory in the first place, 30-plus years ago," Talbot said. "Many people of our community have met Bob who has showed them the observatory and he has made a great impact in their lives."

At his retirement party Friday, Powell was surrounded by many relatives and professors but there were also current and former students who attended.

"I was in the 10th

grade at Central High School when Dr. Powell met my classmates and I through our science teacher," said Robert Ogletree. "He brought us out to the geology building, and that was in 1967, so even back then he wanted as many students interested as he was."

Powell was known for his community outreach and impact, determination to help build the observatory, but also recently his work with students to travel to South Carolina in August to be in the solar eclipse "path of totality" to conduct the Eddington Experiment.

Powell said that in the past he had attempted to view the solar eclipse twice, once in 1970 and the other in 1972. Both times the weather was not good and hindered the view of the solar eclipse.

In August, however, Powell was successful in viewing the solar eclipse and was able to share that moment with a team of students from UWG.