



## leadership initiative

### Luther H. Hodges Leadership Center to Support Leadership Education

**UNC's Kenan-Flagler Business School has created the Luther H. Hodges Leadership Center to support leadership education and to honor the late North Carolina Gov. Luther H. Hodges. The following biography profiles this remarkable man and his many contributions to North Carolina and the United States.**

Born on a tenant farm in southern Virginia, Luther H. Hodges rose to far-reaching accomplishments that include being vice president and director of Marshall Field and Co. in Chicago and head of the Industry Division of the Economic Recovery Program — the Marshall Plan — to rebuild Western Europe. He was lieutenant governor and governor of North Carolina during a time of change, including the early years of school desegregation, the beginnings of the community college system and the state's first public television station, and the birth of the Research Triangle Park.

He served as U.S. secretary of commerce under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson. In his final years, Hodges was president of Rotary International and chairman of the board of the Research Triangle Foundation.

When Hodges arrived in Chapel Hill in September 1915, he had two-and-a-half years of high school under his belt and \$62.50 in his pocket. He worked his way through college waiting tables and washing dishes in Swain Hall, firing furnaces in the homes of townspeople and repairing shoes. In his first two summers, he worked as a mill hand and a traveling book salesman. In summer 1918, he served as a second lieutenant in the Army.

At UNC, he was president of the Dialectical Society and of the senior class, a member of the YMCA Cabinet and the debate team, and a varsity basketball player. When he graduated with a degree in economics, he was voted best all-round man in the class of 1919.

Hodges retired from Marshall Field in 1950, saying he intended "to devote the rest of my life to public service." Within months, he was headed across the Atlantic to serve as head of the Marshall Plan.

He later ran for political office, winning the lieutenant governor's race in 1952 against a veteran and strong opponent. As he campaigned, he seldom bought more than a dollar's worth of gas at a

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Mindy Storrie, Director of Leadership Development  
Mindy\_Storrie@unc.edu  
[www.kenan-flagler.unc.edu/Leadership](http://www.kenan-flagler.unc.edu/Leadership)



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time, so that he could introduce himself to people at filling stations and ask for their vote.

He was at home in Leaksville reading the newspaper in November 1954 when he received the news that Gov. William B. Umstead had died. Two days later, he took the oath of office as governor and successfully ran for election in his own right in 1956, carrying every county in the state. When he discovered after the election that the campaign had cost 25 percent less than had been budgeted, he returned the excess to his contributors.

In his six years as governor, Hodges worked to raise the standard of living of North Carolinians and to attract industry to the state. He was the first American governor to go to Europe to seek foreign investment in his state. He convinced the North Carolina General Assembly to fund industrial education centers — the forerunner of the community college system — and got lawmakers to pass a minimum wage law, the first state in the South to do so.

As governor, Hodges also was a driving force behind the establishment and development of the Research Triangle Park.

Hodges died on Oct. 6, 1974, after suffering a stroke at his home in Chapel Hill. His obituary in *The New York Times* read: "Luther H. Hodges rose from a tenant farm to the governor's mansion in North Carolina and the Cabinet in Washington as Secretary of Commerce. A leading moderate in a time of racial stress in the South, Gov. Hodges gave no aid to segregationists, instead calling for obedience to the law."

*Sources: UNC General Alumni Association and the Chapel Hill Museum*

