

**Connecticut
State
University**

Central • Eastern • Southern • Western

BR#91-108

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RESOLUTION

of

CONGRATULATIONS

to

DR. STEPHEN FELDMAN, PRESIDENT
WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

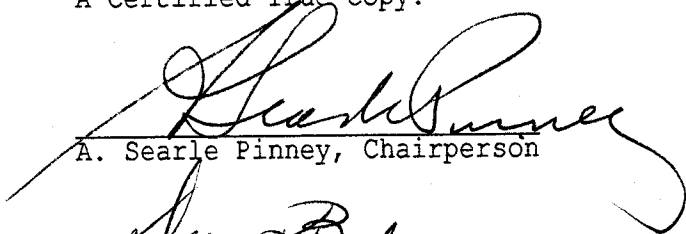
July 19, 1991


WHEREAS, Stephen Feldman has completed his tenth year as President of Western Connecticut State University on July 15, 1991, and

WHEREAS, Under President Feldman's leadership Western has over the past decade developed into a comprehensive university offering quality programs in business administration, liberal arts, teacher education, nursing and criminal justice, be it

RESOLVED, That the Board of Trustees expresses its sincere appreciation and congratulations to President Feldman and wishes him much success in his continued leadership of Western Connecticut State University.

A Certified True Copy:


A. Searle Pinney, Chairperson


Dallas K. Beal, President



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Survival and success at WestConn

By Daniela Waterman
THE NEWS-TIMES

DANBURY — On a wind-whipped November afternoon under a billowing tent, Stephen Feldman was doing what he does best: schmoozing with politicians, posing for photos and trumpeting Western Connecticut State University.

The 46-year-old university president basked in a moment of reflected glory as then-Gov. William A. O'Neill stuck a silver shovel in the frozen ground to inaugurate construction of a \$14.8 million field house.

The athletic center, which is now rising from the shadows of the west-side campus, is the *piece de resistance* of Feldman's 10-year tenure at WestConn's helm. Like Little Jack Horner, he stuck his thumb into the state's fiscal morass and pulled out a plum.

"If you really narrow it down, that is the thing I am most happy about," Feldman said. He can't help but smile. Seven months after the ground-breaking, he still savors the day.

The field house is a showcase for Feldman's strengths — his formidable political skills, his relentless drive to improve the university's image and an uncanny ability to delegate authority and get things done.

"Steve can be a difficult guy, but he's clearly done a lot for the university," English professor John Briggs observed.

The field house also crystallizes criticism that has dogged Feldman for years — whispers that he was preoccupied with athletic glory and favored the west-side campus. Some professors also have charged his administration has ruled the university with an authoritarian style that squelched academic debate and created a climate of paranoia on campus.

But the angry criticisms, which just three years ago erupted in calls for Feldman's resignation, have evaporated. The once-fractured



The News-Times/Carol Kaliff

After 10 years as president of Western Connecticut State University, Stephen Feldman is still aggressive but his management style has mellowed, colleagues say.

campus community has more or less united during the past year to fight massive budget cuts.

"I think the faculty recognizes that Steve Feldman is wonderful with money. And with the state's impending economic disaster, we couldn't have a better person at the helm of the university at this time,"

said Peter Lyons, who was president of the University Senate during the tumultuous battles of the late 1980s.

Added James Munz, a philosophy professor who leads the faculty union. "When you have both internal and external enemies or problems, you tend to deal with those

WestConn

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that are most threatening. Right now, that's the legislature and the governor, not Steve Feldman."

When Feldman was appointed president in June 1981, WestConn was a sleepy, state college with an enrollment of about 2,800 students and a reputation as a sure bet among local high school students.

"Western was perceived as a school that was easy to get into. No one knew what we had here," Feldman said. His high-pitched voice revealed the slightest trace of a Brooklyn accent.

He set out to change that. Using his links to Hartford — and enlisting the aid of well-connected university administrators like Dean of Personnel Francis J. Muska — Feldman beefed up WestConn's budget. Annual appropriations grew from \$10.8 million in 1981 to \$27.9 million last year. He also used his strong ties to the local business community to raise more than \$5 million over the past decade.

"I think it's clear that Steve is a zealous advocate for development and growth for the school," said state Sen. James Maloney, D-Danbury. "People may get alarmed at the pace he might like to go, but when you have someone that's that eager to build a university, that's a relatively small price to pay."

As Feldman revitalized the athletic program, toughened admissions standards and added graduate programs in nursing and business administration, he remade the school's image. He polished the ragged appearance of the campus, fixing sidewalks and renovating run-down buildings. He also spearheaded a drive to change WestConn and the other three state colleges to state universities.

"When he took over, Western was really on the brink of exploding its abilities," said Larry Davidson, chairman of the Connecticut State University Board of Trustees, which oversees all four campuses.

"It evolved from a teacher's col-

lege to an all-purpose college to a true university and a good deal of the credit for all this goes to Dr. Feldman," Davidson said.

There has been trouble along the way: fights with faculty over tenure; nagging claims that Feldman, former dean of the Ansell School of Business, neglects liberal arts; and bitter arguments over the role of a behind-the-scenes university fundraising foundation.

In 1989, WestConn was rocked by allegations that student athletes with questionable grades were being admitted to the Basic Studies program. An investigation by the University Senate last year found that the athletic department indeed had too great a hand in the admission of star athletes. The Basic Studies program has since been disbanded.

This year, there have been spirited disagreements over university limits on free speech, allegations that campus administrators covered up a raid on a women's dormitory and assertions that they are insensitive to the needs of women.

Feldman brushes aside most controversies, but he seems to have changed his management style. No longer perceived as a tightly wound ruler insulated by his advisors, he seems more comfortable with professors. He now attends most University Senate meetings. He's also a regular at the faculty dining room, where he often shares a cup of coffee with a professor.

"Maybe he's mellowed," Briggs said.

But the stormy battle in 1988 with faculty over a decision to deny tenure to an economics professor has left a lingering bruise.

Davidson called the episode, which sparked a clamorous call for Feldman's resignation, "a family argument."

"It was blown out of proportion," Davidson said. "I'm still not sure who was at fault. There was probably enough blame to go around."

Munz said Feldman's inner circle of advisors held most of the responsibility for the conflict.

"I've never had the sense he was authoritarian. He delegates a good

deal of authority to his management people. In some cases, the (union) felt that those people didn't do it right," Munz said.

When asked what he would change about the past 10 years, the usually effusive Feldman was quiet. He shifted uneasily in his burnished leather chair and stumbled over his words.

"If I were to point to one thing I'd like to undo . . . well, three years ago, I would have liked to resolve things differently. That's the one thing I'd like to undo," he said.

In the rough-and-tumble world of academia, where careers are often built on egos as much intellect, Feldman is a survivor. Forty percent of university presidents stay in office for less than three years, according to a 1987 study cited by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

"The average president works 60 to 80 hours a week," said Hinda Greenberg, director of the Carnegie Foundation's information center. "There's a great sense of pressure, which may explain why many of them burn out so quickly."

And, like school superintendents, college presidents are high-profile targets and easy scapegoats for those dissatisfied with the status quo.

"In the whole state, only Father (the Rev. Aloysius) Kelley at Fairfield University has been in office longer than me. And he's at a very different type of institution," Feldman said, his voice rising as he marveled at his staying power.

A New Yorker transplanted to Redding, Feldman has formed a strong bond with the Danbury community. He sits on the board of Danbury Hospital, the United Way of Northern Fairfield County and the Chamber of Commerce among others. His wife, Constance, is a substitute teacher and his two teen-age children, Jennifer and Timothy, are enrolled in Redding public schools.

Davidson said the Board of Trustees is pleased with Feldman's performance and hopes he stays at WestConn.

"I'm not saying that he or any one of our presidents couldn't be hired

by a university outside the state. Some may stay until they retire, others may have something else in mind."

When asked about Feldman's future at WestConn, Davidson balanced his comments carefully.

"He's an energetic, vibrant person. But I think he's very happy at the university," Davidson said.

It's no secret that Feldman has applied for other jobs. A few years ago, he sought the presidency of the University of Connecticut. Last spring, he was somewhat embar-

rassed when word leaked that he was a finalist for president of York College, a small, private school in western Pennsylvania. He didn't get the job.

"I'm very happy here and I'm certainly not looking to leave," Feldman said. "However, at some point in the future, if the right opportunity is offered, I would consider it and perhaps accept it."

If Feldman were to leave tomorrow, said English professor Peter Lyons, "it would be without acrimony on either side."

WESTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

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Planning
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NEWS RELEASE

Frederick J. Leuthauser
Executive Dean
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June 24, 1991

Stephen Feldman will complete his tenth year as President of Western Connecticut State University on July 15. During this decade WestConn has experienced a tremendous increase in the quality and quantity of students applying to the university and a sharp rise in faculty scholarship. The campus has been renovated and expanded, and expenditures for equipment, books, and computers have risen dramatically.

In reviewing his years as President, Feldman stated that "we already had a first rate faculty in place, and with the support of our Board of Trustees, who have been extremely effective advocates for Western, we have been able to secure the resources and attract the students that have enabled the faculty to build a fine university."

Attached is a table indicating the growth during the past decade. (For a more comprehensive report call Fred Leuthauser, Executive Dean at 797-4321.)

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Connecticut State Univ.
Academic Affairs

TEN YEARS OF PROGRESS 1981-1991

HIGHLIGHTS

	1981	1991	Percent Increase
Computer Terminals	16	450	2800%
Department Academic Equipment	\$ 26,000	\$ 280,000	1077%
Total Equipment. (Approx.)	\$ 40,000	\$ 800,000	1900%
Library books, periodicals	\$110,260	\$ 474,180	430%
Other expenses	\$754,161	\$2,340,678	310%
Positions	390	453	+ 16%
Freshman Applicants	1,833	2,486	35%
SAT Scores	860	933	N/A
Minority Students	252	491	95%
Percentage Ph.D or Terminally Qualified Faculty	60%	76%	27%
Faculty Scholarship Activities	77	226	194%
Capital Improvements			\$28,089,000.

6/20/91