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## Salem News

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- Dr. Richard E. Wylie, president of Endicott College, talks about his 25-year tenure at the school while walking around the Beverly campus on Monday morning. David Le/Staff photo



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### [Big man on campus](#)

#### **Endicott marks Wylie's 25th year as president**

By Paul Leighton Staff writer

BEVERLY — As Dick Wylie walked through the Endicott College campus — *his* Endicott College campus, you might say — he took the time to say hello to every student who passed by.

At a burly 6-foot-2, wearing a crisp gray suit with white shirt and pink tie, and walking with a limp from recent surgery on his leg, Wylie was hard to miss.

"Hi folks, are you ready for the beach?" he said to one group as they crossed the footbridge over the pond in the middle of campus.

"See you Tuesday," he said to two business students, referring to an upcoming symposium and dinner.

"Hi Doc, how are you?" one student called out, invoking the nickname students use for Wylie, who has a doctorate in education from Boston University.

Climbing a path leading to the construction site where the new Center for Life Sciences and Business will soon rise, Wylie bent over to pick up a discarded juice bottle.

"Remembering the names is difficult, but I try to get to know all the students," he said. "You couldn't do that at a big university."

On Saturday night, more than 300 people are expected to turn out for a black-tie event celebrating Wylie's 25th anniversary as president of Endicott College. Only one other college president in Massachusetts, Sister Janet Eisner of Emmanuel College, has served longer at one school.

Wylie, who turns 71 on Monday, has presided over an explosive expansion of the college. When he took over in 1987, Endicott was a two-year, women-only college with 583 students. Today, it is a coeducational school with almost 5,000 students enrolled in Beverly and campuses in Mexico City and Madrid.

The number of buildings (51) and the size of the campus (235 acres) have nearly doubled, while the budget (\$85.8 million) and endowment (\$38.7 million) have increased tenfold under Wylie.

Tom Alexander, a Beverly lawyer who is chairman of the trustees at Endicott, attributes the growth to Wylie's "terrific energy level" and "larger-than life" persona.

"He really lives Endicott College, pretty much from 6 o'clock in the morning, and it's not unusual, to midnight," Alexander said. "He even shows up at The Lodge, a pizza place on campus, at 10 o'clock at night to get feedback from students.

"When you ask students after they graduate what they liked most about Endicott, they often say, 'I don't know anybody else who personally knows their college president.'"

From brink of bankruptcy

Wylie came to Endicott from Lesley University, where he was a vice president and dean. At Lesley, he built the graduate school "from scratch," he said, and learned the "entrepreneurial spirit" that has been his guiding force at Endicott.

Endicott was on the verge of bankruptcy when he took over, he said. One of his first meetings involved a plan to sell the college to Tufts University.

"We had \$25,000 in capital to fix the roofs," he said. "One of the first things I did was spend \$5,000 to plant flowers. One of the professors said, 'You'll go down in history as the president who planted the most flowers.'"

Wylie persuaded the trustees to spend money to build new townhouse dormitories to attract students. Despite a stock market crash that disrupted the financing, the trustees approved the project.

"From that day on it was a sign of opportunity," Wylie said. "People see bulldozers and they see new buildings. It's a sign of energy."

Endicott's growth has not come without trade-offs. As the city of Beverly has struggled with budget issues, the college has become a lightning rod for criticism over how much nonprofit institutions should pay the city to compensate for their tax-exempt status.

Endicott is donating \$500,000 over three years to the city. But Willow Street resident Toni Musante, who served on a city committee that studied nonprofit payments, said that's not nearly enough based on the value of the college's 235 acres, much of it prime oceanfront property.

"(Wylie) has done a lot of good for the college, but my only criticism has been the issue of taxes and taking so much property off the payrolls," Musante said. "In recent times, he's started to contribute, but I think it's a small gesture toward what the real value of the property is. You look at what the rest of us have paid with small homes, and it's out of proportion."

### Giving back

Those complaints frustrate Wylie, who says critics fail to take into account the college's overall impact on the region's economy. In a letter to Mayor Bill Scanlon in January, Wylie said the college purchased more than \$12 million locally in supplies and equipment in 2011, while students, faculty and visitors spent more than \$8 million.

He also said the city received nearly \$800,000 in "revenues, donations and other support" in 2011, including building permits, scholarships and tutoring services. He pointed out that the college pays meals and occupancy taxes for its hotel and conference center, which are named after him.

Wylie said the college has come a long way in its relations with the community; before he arrived, the college posted "No trespassing" signs on its property.

"In the beginning, I would have liked to do more," he said. "Now that we've got the money, we're doing more."

Along with all of the new buildings and expanded academic programs have come higher costs for students. Tuition, room and board averages about \$40,000 per year.

Wylie said that figure is still below some of Endicott's main competitors, like Western New England College, Roger Williams, St. Anselm's and Stonehill. But he also acknowledged that Endicott gives less student aid than many of its peers.

Endicott's tuition-discount rate — the difference between what students actually pay and the college's sticker price — is 27 percent, less than the 40 percent national average. Wylie said Endicott plans to increase student aid now that most of its major building projects — more than \$100 million worth of new or renovated buildings — are complete.

"I've always said the day the cost of our education exceeds the value, we're out of business," he said.

Wylie's salary and benefits totaled \$399,907 for the fiscal year 2010, the most recent year for which the figures are publicly available. He lives in a mansion, across the street from the college on Hale Street, that the college bought for \$3.1 million in 2010. He and his wife, Mary, have four children and seven grandchildren. Their son, Brian, is the athletic director at Endicott.

Endicott spokeswoman Joanne Waldner said Wylie just signed a new contract with the college. "We expect that he will be here to fulfill the contract and possibly beyond," she said.

'Builder and dreamer'

Alexander, the trustee chairman, said Wylie's success has not gone to his head. He told a story about how Wylie, wearing a white polo shirt with "Endicott College" on the front, was driving around campus in a golf cart on freshman move-in day this past fall, greeting everyone.

When a car pulled up in front of a dorm with a new student, the parents spotted Wylie and, assuming he was a college employee, asked him to help them unload. Without saying a word, Wylie picked up a couple of bags and brought them to the student's room.

"It doesn't go to his head," Alexander said. "He really gives a lot of himself to others."

Wylie credits the faculty, staff and trustees with helping him transform the college. But he said it's his relationship with the students that drives him most.

He often invites them to his house in large groups for dinner. When he underwent his leg surgery, students cooked him meals. One student said he didn't know how to cook, so he brought him a package of hot dogs and rolls.

Standing on a hill beside College Hall, the ocean shining in the sun across the street, Wylie said, "This was the perfect place for me.

"I'm a builder, I'm a dreamer. I like to create things, but I need people around me to show that passion."

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