



Dr. Holden Thorp

Director



Holden Thorp, a Carolina alumnus and faculty member, took office July 1, 2008, as the University's 10th chancellor – a job he calls the best in American public higher education – following a national search. He was installed on University Day, Oct. 12, 2008.

Thorp, 45, dean of UNC's College of Arts and Sciences since July 2007, succeeded Chancellor James Moeser.

A 1986 UNC graduate, Thorp, has rapidly progressed through several leadership posts since joining the faculty 15 years ago. A native of Fayetteville, he is a Kenan Professor and an award-winning teacher and researcher. Thorp was the unanimous choice of the Chancellor Search Committee chaired by Trustee Nelson Schwab. He was nominated to the UNC System's Board of Governors by UNC President Erskine Bowles.

Thorp had led the College of Arts and Sciences since July 1, 2007. He also chaired the nationally recognized department of chemistry, where he has been a full professor since 1999. He was faculty director of a fundraising effort attracting about \$17 million for the Carolina Physical Science Complex as part of the Carolina First Campaign.

From 2001 to 2005, Thorp directed the Morehead Planetarium and Science Center, guiding efforts to expand the planetarium's original emphasis to become a comprehensive science education center for North Carolina. In that role, he increased public attendance by 40 percent and expanded the Planetarium's traditional focus to encompass new areas of science education. Under his leadership, for example, the science center developed "DNA: The Secret of Life," a film that was installed at science museums throughout North America, including the American Museum of Natural History in New York City.

Thorp has published more than 130 scholarly articles on the electronic properties of DNA and RNA. He invented technology for electronic DNA chips that is the basis of 19 issued or pending U.S. patents. One invention provides a less expensive blood test to determine if prospective parents carry the cystic fibrosis gene. For his DNA chip technology, Thorp was recognized as one of the Top Innovators of 2001 by Fortune Small Business magazine. He also has been adviser, co-founder or consultant with many small companies, including Novalon Pharmaceuticals, MaxCyte, Osmetech, OhmX and Plextronics. In 2005, Thorp co-founded Viamet Pharmaceuticals Inc., a biotechnology company targeting metalloenzymes in the fields of infectious disease, inflammation and oncology.

Thorp has received many other honors for his research, including the National Science Foundation's Presidential Young Investigator Award, an Alfred P. Sloan Fellowship, the David and Lucile Packard Fellowship for Science and Engineering, and both the New Faculty Award and Teacher-Scholar Award from the Camille and Henry Dreyfus Foundation. At Carolina, Thorp has won the Tanner Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching, the Ruth and Philip Hettleman Prize for Artistic and Scholarly Achievement, and the General Alumni Association's Distinguished Young Alumnus Award. In 2002, he was named an honorary member of the Order of the Golden Fleece, the campus' oldest honorary society.

Thorp received his bachelor of science degree with highest honors in chemistry from UNC in 1986. He earned a doctorate in chemistry from the California Institute of Technology in 1989, was a postdoctoral associate at Yale University and started his faculty career at N.C. State University as an assistant professor of chemistry. He joined the UNC faculty in 1993.

An accomplished musician who plays jazz bass and keyboard, Thorp is married to Patti Worden Thorp, a Hope Mills native and UNC Greensboro graduate. They have two children: John, 14, and Emma, 10.