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Palm Beach Atlantic University unveils 7-foot statue of founding president

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Palm Beach Atlantic University today honored Jess Moody, the school's founding father and first president, by unveiling a 7-foot, 715-pound bronze statue of the charismatic Baptist preacher.

"Now I know how a pancake feels when syrup is poured on it," Moody said. "This is a glorious day."

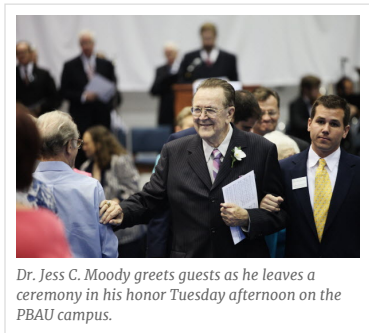
Several hundred PBAU staffers and administrators, along with Moody's wife and son, were in attendance for the 25-minute dedication ceremony at the Christian college. Moody thanked his wife, Doris, for not letting him give up on his dream. He also thanked generous donors and PBAU presidents who followed him.



Dr. Jess C. Moody, the founder and first president of Palm Beach Atlantic University, looks on as he is honored by interim President William Fleming Jr. on Tuesday afternoon on the PBAU campus during Jess Moody Day.

The 85-year-old Moody said he had a speech written for the occasion, but decided against reading most of it.

"I can't see it," Moody cracked in his customary Texas twang.



Dr. Jess C. Moody greets guests as he leaves a ceremony in his honor Tuesday afternoon on the PBAU campus.

The statue, which stands on an 18-inch granite base, faces south, overlooking the center of the campus. In it, a bespectacled Moody is dressed in a suit, staring off into the distance and holding the Bible in his right hand as a stiff breeze has his tie and jacket flapping in the wind.

Zenos Frudakis, the Philadelphia artist who created the statue, said the wind represents those who said Moody couldn't live his dream by creating a Christian

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university. Moody served as both pastor and president of Palm Beach Atlantic from 1968-1972.

"He heard so many people who said he couldn't do it," said Frudakis, who also sculpted the bronze statue of John D. MacArthur, founder of Palm Beach Gardens. "This statue isn't just somebody in a suit. It has an attitude and I hope it has some of his spirit and character."

Moody, a former pastor at First Baptist Church of West Palm Beach who came to West Palm in 1961 at the urging of Billy Graham, was the first president of what originally was Palm Beach Atlantic College. The school opened with only 84 students. The school now has 3,659 students.

Moody and his wife also started the university's Workship program, which requires all full-time undergraduate students to volunteer at least 45 hours annually at nonprofit agencies, schools or churches.

PBAU Interim President Bill Fleming called Moody a visionary.

"He sees things that others don't," Fleming said. "And then he says, 'Why not?'"

Moody said God told him a long time ago what his life's mission should be.

"He woke me up in the middle of the night and spoke to my heart to found this college," Moody said.

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