Central Athletic Director C.J. Jones Retiring

By DESMOND CONNER | The Hartford Courant
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Calling someone an institution these days can be another way of saying that person has been around too long.

But not when referring to Central Connecticut State University athletic director Charles "C.J." Jones.

"People have been using the word institution around here," Jones said. "To me, [Harrison] Kaiser [the school's first football coach] and Bill Detrick [who coached basketball for 29 seasons] were institutions. If people say I bleed blue or I'm an institution like those guys ... there is no greater compliment."

Jones, a 1969 Central graduate, will retire as athletic director July 1. He has spent 44 years at the school in various roles, from student athlete to coach to AD, a job he has been doing since 1995, when he replaced Judith Davidson. Jones has decided to take an early retirement package recently offered to state employees.

"Our athletics are doing well, our budget, despite the state of the economy, is doing well," Jones said Tuesday. "I was thinking about doing it in another year or two anyway, but the early retirement thing popped up, and with things going well here, I talked it over with some people and decided now is the time."

There was no word on any possible replacement.

Jones, 63, said it hasn't exactly been easy for him walking the halls of the school. Many administrators and coaches have been quite emotional about his decision. Their reaction has hit him pretty hard as well. It's hard for people to imagine Central without Jones.

So what does an "institution" do after leaving his institution, aka CCSU?

"I don't know," Jones said, chuckling. "I'm doing the things I would normally do in the coming weeks around this time of year, go camping and on vacation. ... It'll probably hit me when it's time for the school year to get going again, but we'll have to see what happens. Hopefully, it's the beginning of a new challenge, but I know this, that if Central needs me in any capacity, official or unofficial, I will not hesitate to be there.

"Central has been a special place. I've gone through some hard times here, and I've gone through some good ones, and everything in between. That's what you call an experience, having the best and worst of times. And when it's all said and done, those experiences, the people you've met, relationships you've formed, friends and relationships you've formed for life, then you call that experience a blessing. That's what my time at Central has been — a blessing. I'm thankful for all of it."

Jones and his wife, Linda, met as undergraduates at CCSU. He played basketball and
baseball, majoring in English with a minor in physical education. Jones received his
master's in educational foundations from Central in 1972.

"When you think of Central Connecticut and Blue Devil athletics, you think of C.J. Jones," said basketball coach Howie Dickenman, who was hired a year after Jones became AD. They were teammates in 1966-68.

Combining regular season and tournaments, Central has won 47 conference championships in Jones' tenure. Central joined the Northeast Conference in 1996.