

# WestConn

## Roach transformed university, and its reputation

**J**ames Roach probably sees the old Western Connecticut State University in his dreams. Old buildings, parking in the wrong places, not much grass.

For the rest of us, of course, that WestConn is long gone - in a transformation that sometimes seemed effortless.

WestConn is now a revitalized university with two beautiful campuses and a reputation that attracts students from well beyond the Danbury area.

It was Roach who transformed WestConn. He says he had much help from local legislators, students, business leaders, state and municipal officials.

But he was the key to the remaking of WestConn, providing the leadership, the networking and the determination needed to make WestConn what it always

should have been - something other than the poor stepchild of the state university system.

The news that Roach has decided to retire as WestConn's president next July is bittersweet. At 71, after 12 years at WestConn, Roach has earned a more peaceful life.

But he will be hard to replace. He had exactly the right combination of skills - academic, management and political - that WestConn needed.

Each fall, new students are welcomed to WestConn through the new gates on White Street on the downtown Danbury campus.

The joy of that ceremony, with faculty and parents and students applauding the new arrivals, is a measure of what Roach did for WestConn.

He will be missed - but not yet. There's a whole year of achievements ahead of him.