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On Oct. 3, 1911 Dr. John Preston McConnell was elected the first president of Radford University. He served as RU president for 27 years. Dr. McConnell became a strong advocate for the education of women.

Many of Dr. McConnell's friends were surprised when he accepted the position at The State Normal and Industrial School for Women at Radford.

According to *Radford University: Investing in Lifetimes* edited by Rob Tucker, Dr. McConnell said, "They felt that a man of ability, character, and promise such as they characterized me, was wronging himself and his family in undertaking to develop the type of institution I had in mind to make the State Teachers College at East Radford."

According to *Radford College: A Sentimental Chronicle Through Its First Half-Century* by Lanora Geissler Lewis-Smith, Dr. McConnell "regretted 'seeing so scholarly a mind being thrown away in the education of women, especially in a normal school where methods courses would stifle real learning.'"

Dr. McConnell was responsible for aiding the Board of Trustees in getting what is now known as Radford University up and running.

According to *Radford College: A Sentimental Chronicle Through Its First Half-Century*, some of his tasks included "organizing the school, planning the administration building, and following up its the administration building, and following up its construction."

He completed these tasks, all without compensation, while continuing to still hold his previous job as dean and professor of history and economics at Emory and Henry College.

He was also responsible for attending to disciplinary conduct issues. Dr. McConnell did not believe that the faculty should discipline the students.

According to *Radford University: Investing in Lifetimes*, "His belief was that they were too busy

preparing and teaching classes to be involved in student lives outside of the classroom.”

Dr. McConnell is still remembered today as the library was named in honor of him. His time as the first president inspired many people to take the education of women more seriously.