Birmingham-Southern President Dr. Neal R. Berte, whose leadership and vision propelled the college to national stature in academics, the arts, and athletics during his 28-year tenure, has announced his retirement effective when a new president is introduced next year. Berte made the announcement at the annual fall meeting of the college’s Board of Trustees on Oct. 2.

Birmingham-Southern’s longest-serving president then informed the rest of the campus community of his future plans during an afternoon gathering in Munger Hall Auditorium.

Berte told the board and the campus community that he is looking forward to assisting the college as needed after a new president is introduced, as well as working in the community and church and spending more time with his wife of 39 years, Anne, and their four children and 10 grandchildren.

“The most important thing we can do as a college is to continue to provide these young men and women with a liberal arts education that will prepare them for the world in which they are going to be living, to develop their full potentials to be the leaders who will strengthen our communities in the future,” Berte said.

Following the announcement, the Board of Trustees unanimously passed a resolution changing Berte’s title to chancellor and president and then unanimously approved the naming of the just-renovated Humanities Center to the Neal and Anne Berte Humanities Center. The refurbished facility was officially dedicated during ceremonies immediately following the adjournment of the board meeting.

W. Michael Atchison, chairman of the college’s Board of Trustees, said that Berte’s tenure on the Hilltop campus was “unprecedented in length and achievements.”

“President Berte, with the help of some dedicated board members, literally rescued the college when he arrived in 1976 from a hapless situation, which conceivably could have led to its demise,” said Atchison, a 1965 BSC graduate and an attorney and senior partner with Starnes and Atchison in Birmingham. “The Berte name is synonymous with integrity and excellence, and we are so proud to have been the recipient of his immense talents and hard work for more than a quarter of a century.