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Pearl McTier Williamson

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Ms. Pearl McTier Williamson



Ms. Pearl M. Williamson came to the fledgling Bayboro Campus of the University of South Florida in 1969, just a year after the campus began offering upper-level courses for students wanting to complete their degrees in St. Petersburg. For nearly the next forty years, Ms. Williamson played a significant role in the successful operations of the campus through her work as a staff member and her mentorship of students.

Ms. Williamson began her duties as a secretary at the campus. During the late 1970s, she moved into the administrative suite as an office manager for Mr. David R. Kenerson, an interim dean at USF St. Petersburg who also taught course in business management. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Williamson became an important member of the administrative staff, assisting Dean John Hinz (1979-1985), Acting Dean Samuel Fustukjian (1985-1986), Dean Lowell E. Davis (1986-1988), Acting Dean Karen Spear (1989-1990), Interim Dean Winston T. Bridges Jr. (1990-1992), and Dean H. W. “Bill” Heller as these campus administrators shaped policy.

Her profound knowledge of the institution’s history and her concern for preserving the traditions that made USF St. Petersburg a welcoming place allowed her to set a tone and create an environment that encouraged newcomers to appreciate the value and special nature of USF’s waterfront campus. Although Williamson worked closely with all campus executive officers, the guidance and assistance she offered Drs. Lowell Davis and Bill Heller allowed them to make early and strong connections with the community that exemplified the “town-and-gown” relationship that defined their tenures of leadership.

Ms. Williamson served as a mentor and role model for students as well. Always concerned about the low enrollment of African American students at USF St. Petersburg, she became a mentor to generations of students, supported the efforts of student groups such as the Association of Black Students, and

provided a valuable voice to remind others of the importance in maintaining an environment that reflected and appreciated diversity.

Since Ms. Williamson's retirement four years ago, she has maintained contacts with the University. For three decades, Ms. Williamson sat alongside the leadership of USF St. Petersburg and watched the small campus develop into an autonomous, separately accredited entity within the University of South Florida System. The successful journey that was paved, in part, by her many contributions during her stellar career at USF St. Petersburg.

Written by: Jim Schnur, Associate Librarian
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