

Dr. Michael P. Tilford

The Official Record

Born 1936 – Died 1996

In his poem “Ulysses” Alfred, Lord Tennyson has Ulysses remark “I am become a name, they know not me.” That is the danger as time passes and Michael Tilford becomes a name, a conference.

- Graduate of Langston University, BS in Mathematics and chemistry, 1957
- MAT in Science Education from Johns Hopkins University, 1958
- Taught Mathematics at Wichita West High School. 1969 was named one of the 100 Black Educators to receive a Ford foundation Grant for Advanced Graduate Study
- Began his career at Wichita state University 1/1/67 in the College of Education
- 1969 Michael was the Director of the Wichita Upward Bound Project
- He receive a Ford Grant for advanced graduate study to complete his Ed. D at Oklahoma State University
- He received his Doctorate in Education from Oklahoma State University in 1970
- He also received a Ford and NSF study grants
- In 1972, he and his wife, Marilyn, were named to the Danforth Associates Program
- Dr. Tilford had a splendid career at Wichita State University:
 - In addition to being Director of the Upward Bound Project, he helped to start the Minority Studies Program in 1971
 - He received tenure in the College of Education
 - He was named Assistant Dean of the Graduate School in 1974 and Dean in 1988
 - In 1994 he was named Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs
 - He was also the advisor and mentor for numerous graduate students and the role model for many more.
- He died unexpectedly 11/6/96 while acting as a consultant to William Patterson College on its efforts to become a university.

The Private Record

- Michael was one of 5 children. His father died shortly after he was born and his mother raised him and his 4 siblings in rural Oklahoma.
- He married Marilyn and they had three children: Mark, Michelle, and Maria – all of whom are well on their way to splendid careers.
- He was also a teacher by example. When my wife and I came to WSU in June of 1973 with our two children, we attended the Newman Center, as did the Tilfords.

- We began a Sunday “after service” small group to discuss the Christian faith and the Christian way of life. Michael and Marilyn taught by example and their marriage as a model for many of us.
- Michael was also an avid golfer. One example of his ability was reported by Lynwood Sexton, a former regent and close friend of Michael’s. Michael couldn’t even see the flag for the hole they were playing. He took his shot but couldn’t find his ball anywhere leading up to the green. He looked and finally another golfer said “it went into the hole.” Michael treasured his hole-in-one as a tribute to his prowess as a golfer.
- At the Heskett Center Michael made his daily runs around the golf course and the campus. He never failed to return with lost golf balls, but he assured me he never took one from the cup.
- Michael was also a maker of golf clubs. He never failed to show me his newest creations. By the way, I’m not a golfer, but I found it interesting because Michael’s science background led him to explain the principles involved.
- How many people does a person like Michael influence for good over a short lifetime of 60 years? How can you measure influence?
 - He was instrumental in using the Mill Levy funding from the City and County to help faculty earn Doctorates.
 - He was instrumental in the start of the Committee on Diversity and Multiculturalism.
 - Countless numbers of students, associates, and friends were influenced by his steady, always gentlemanly, commitment to social justice.
 - In a world that grows increasingly shrill and uncivil, Michael Tilford exemplified the good that can be done by lowering one’s voice, being civil and courteous, and looking for sensible solutions to problems even if those problems may take time to resolve.
- In his many efforts to increase diversity, Michael was encouraged and supported by his wife who is with us today – I would like to introduce Marilyn Tilford.
- The gleam of Michael’s vision lives in this conference. Tennyson’s Merlin encourages a follower to “Launch your vessel/And, ere the gleam vanishes over the margin/After it, follow it/Follow The Gleam.
- I encourage you to follow the gleam, the spark of diversity enkindled by Michael Tilford. Welcome to Wichita State University and to the legacy of Dr. Michael Tilford.
- 4 Oct 07