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Commencements Set for Dec. 15 and 17; Sleigh to Receive Kinard Award

Winthrop University

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Commencements Set for Dec. 15 and 17; Sleigh to Receive Kinard Award

Quick Facts

- During the 11 a.m. ceremony at Winthrop Coliseum, the university will award 300 degrees to graduating seniors and an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters to Rock Hill businessman and philanthropist Gary Williams.
- Merry Sleigh, an associate professor in the Department of Psychology, joined the Winthrop faculty in 2003 and quickly established herself as an outstanding teacher who not only teaches difficult courses but transforms her students to engage in their learning.



Merry Sleigh

ROCK HILL, S.C. - An outstanding psychology faculty member who seeks to transform student learning will receive a prized faculty award for teaching during the Dec. 17 **undergraduate Commencement** at Winthrop University.

Also during the 11 a.m. ceremony at Winthrop Coliseum, the university will award 300 degrees to graduating seniors and an honorary degree of Doctor of Humane Letters to Rock Hill businessman and philanthropist Gary Williams.

The **James Pinckney Kinard and Lee Wicker Kinard Award for Excellence in Teaching** will go to **Merry Sleigh**. Established by the Kinard family in honor of former Winthrop President James P. Kinard and his wife, Lee Wicker Kinard, the award is given annually to the faculty member who has demonstrated a dedication to teaching.

Sleigh, an associate professor in the **Department of Psychology**, joined the Winthrop faculty in 2003 and quickly established herself as an outstanding teacher who not only teaches difficult courses but transforms her students to engage in their learning. She embodies many of the qualities of an excellent teacher: commitment to student learning, high standards and expectations, superior command of subject matter and a passion for improvement.

Heavily involved in supporting undergraduate research, **Sleigh** is a willing mentor to any student who wishes to work on a research project. She has supervised more than 180 students in more than 130 conference presentations. Under Sleigh's direction, the Winthrop chapter of **Psi Chi** routinely receives a "model chapter" award from the national office and in 2009 was selected as best chapter in the Southeast.

She models the virtues of a scholar to her students with her own program of research, which focuses on **neonatal development**, along with presentation and publication. She has reviewed for and published in referred journals such as **Teaching of Psychology**, **Developmental Psychobiology** and **Journal of Comparative Psychology**.

Sleigh received the **2008 College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Advisor Award** and the **2010 Psi Chi Regional Faculty Advisor Award**. In 2011, she received the **Southeastern Psychological Association Mentor Award** and the prestigious **Florence Denmark Psi Chi Faculty Award**, given to one Psi Chi advisor nationally each year.

She earned her undergraduate degree in psychology and English from James Madison University and a master's degree and Ph.D. in developmental psychology, both from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

Williams to receive honorary degree

President Anthony DiGiorgio will confer an honorary degree on businessman **Gary Williams**, who is a champion for education in the Rock Hill community.

Born in Atlanta, Ga., Williams spent his childhood in Memphis, Tenn., and Charlotte, N.C. He moved to Rock Hill in 1975 to start his own business and then founded **Williams & Fudge Inc.** in 1986 to serve the higher education community.

Williams donates his time and talents to serve as an officer of the **Winthrop University Foundation** and is the incoming president. He also has served on the boards of the **Rock Hill school district**, **York County Community Foundation**, **Culture & Heritage Museums** and the **Boy Scouts**.

He has contributed to the revitalization of downtown Rock Hill with the renovation of the **Old Cotton Factory**, which houses the **Williams & Fudge, Inc.** offices. The building showcases area history and efforts by area artists, including those at Winthrop, to capture the vanishing railroad and textile industries.

Graduate Commencement also scheduled

Winthrop will hold its **graduate Commencement** on Dec. 15 at the Winthrop Coliseum where 90 students will receive master's or specialist degrees. The ceremony begins at 7 p.m.

Students who graduated in August, which includes 64 undergraduates and 56 graduates, have the option of participating in the **December Commencement** activities.

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