

Recognizing Excellence-Honoring our History

SCCPA Award Honorees

Charles H. Witten

The Charles H. Witten Service Award

Purpose: To recognize one member of SCCPA who has served SCCPA within the past year in an outstanding capacity.

Criteria: Nominees must be a current member of SCCPA and have made significant contributions to the organization within the past year. Nominees may not be nominated for work they have completed as an elected officer. Contributions made as an appointed officer, committee chair, or as a general member during the calendar year are eligible for consideration.

Dr. Charles H. Whitten was educated at Townsend Harris Hall and the University of North Carolina from which he received the A.B., M.A. and Ph.D. Degrees. He also was awarded the M.Ed. By the University of South Carolina.

After serving for over 20 years as a commissioned officer in the Navy, Captain Witten retired from Naval duty. On his retirement from the Navy, he became Dean of Students and head of the Student Affairs Division and Assistant Professor of Education at the University of South Carolina. Upon assuming his new duties, his first major task was to prepare for and carry out the peaceful integration of the student body. In 1955, Witten's title was changed to Vice President for Student Affairs. Among the many services and programs begun under his leadership were the Counseling Center, Office of Student Financial Aid, Office of Orientation, Office of Career Advisement, International Student Affairs, Minority Student Affairs, Upward Bound, Project Talent Search, Kampus Kiddie Kare, and Office of Volunteer Services. He also assisted in the foundation of the nationally famous University 101 program.

In 1975, Witten resigned as head of the Student Affairs Division to assume full time teaching duties in the College of Education. From 1977 to 1986, when he retired as Distinguished Professor Emeritus, he was head of the Program in Student Personnel Services and Higher Education Administration.

In the College of Education, Dr. Witten was instrumental in starting up the Master's program in Student Personnel Services and the Ph.D. program in Higher Education Administration. He was a founder and first President of the SC Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators and founder of SCCPA of which he is a past president. He assisted in the founding of the National Association of Campus Activities. He is an Honorary Life Member of all three organizations. He is also a long time member in several other state, regional, and national professional organizations.

Clarice W. Johnson

The Clarice W. Johnson Outstanding Professional Award

Purpose: To recognize and encourage outstanding contributions to the field of student affairs by a "seasoned" professional.

Criteria: Nominees must have been employed as a student affairs professional for more than five years. Nominees must have provided outstanding contributions to the field of student affairs, preferably in South Carolina. Membership in SCCPA is required.

Clarice Johnson graduated from Presbyterian College in 1941. She went on to teach in the schools of South Carolina and to serve as a bookkeeper for Laurens County School District #56. She then accepted a position with the Presbyterian Church's counseling center for the Synod of the Southeast (Career and Personal Counseling Center) and was also in charge of counseling the Presbyterian College student body. Ms. Johnson retired in 1985.

Clarice Johnson was named Clinton's Woman of the Year in 1966. She has been a member of several professional organizations and served on the national board of directors of the International Association of Counseling Services, Inc. from 1972-1976, as well as serving on the board of directors of the South Carolina Vocational Guidance Association from 1976-1977 and the SCVGA president from 1977-1978. Clarice Johnson was instrumental in organizing the South Carolina branch of the American College Personnel Association (SCCPA) and served as the organization's first president from 1969-1971.

Clarice W. Johnson has also served her community. She held leadership roles in Delta Kappa Gamma and the Piedmont Branch of the Association of American Penwomen. She remains active with her husband with Senior Options, especially with its "Meals on Wheels" program.

Walter T. Cox

The Walter T. Cox New Professional Award

Purpose: To recognize and encourage outstanding contributions and/or potential in the field of student affairs by a new professional.

Criteria: Nominees must have shown outstanding contributions or potential in the field of student affairs. Nominees must have been employed as a student affairs professional for less than three years. Membership in SCCPA is required.

Walter T. Cox graduated from Clemson College in 1939. From 1940 through 1950, Dr. Cox served in a variety of roles at Clemson. As Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students for more than 30 years, Walter Cox played an active role in shaping Clemson's history. Most notably he experienced Clemson's transition from a regional military college with a corps of cadets to a co-educational civilian student body. He was also instrumental in ensuring a peaceful environment for the successful integration of Clemson when other southern colleges experienced riots and extreme racial unrest.

In 1985, Walter Cox was appointed President of Clemson University and served in this capacity until 1986, when he was named President Emeritus. Today, he remains active on campus, lending his expertise to the President and to the Office for Development.

Paul P. Fidler

The Paul P. Fidler Bridge-Builder Award

Purpose: To recognize contributions on the part of a student affairs professional and/or faculty member to build a stronger alliance between student and academic affairs.

Criteria: Nominees must have shown active interest in and made contributions toward building relationships among student and academic affairs. Membership in SCCPA is not required.

Dr. Paul P. Fidler was the first graduate of USC's Student Personnel Administration Master's program, and he earned a Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration from Florida State University. For most of his career, Dr. Fidler served as Director of Research, Grants and Planning in the Division of Student Affairs at USC-Columbia, where he also held the rank of associate professor in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policies. Further, he was a key member of the University 101 faculty, and an expert in that field. Dr. Fidler was a long-time member of SCCPA, having served in numerous leadership positions within the organization. He was working at USC under Vice President Charles H. Witten at the time SCCPA was founded. He was elected president for 1974-75 and was re-elected for a second term for 1988-89. In the early 1990's, Paul again served on the SCCPA Executive Board, and was the first editor of the organization's on-line journal.

It is appropriate that the Bridge-Builder Award be named for Dr. Paul P. Fidler, as he spent a majority of his time as liaison between the USC Division of Student Affairs and the Department of Educational Leadership and Policies. In addition, Paul developed the Chaplain's Association at USC and served as the conduit between that association and the university. Paul co-chaired USC's Honors and Awards Day with two faculty members; this celebration at USC highlights the best and brightest students in academics and activities.

In the early 1990's, Dr. Fidler was diagnosed with leukemia; he fought a long and brave battle with the disease until he passed away on June 22, 2003. During his illness, Paul remained professionally active as long as possible, and continued to be an inspiration to his many friends and colleagues.

Hilda F. Owens

The Hilda F. Owens Research/Writing Award

Purpose: To recognize a member of SCCPA who has made an outstanding contribution to the student affairs profession through writing and/or research.

Criteria: Writing cited for nomination must have been completed within the last three years and shall have practical significance to the profession. Submissions should be previously published (cite source and date of publication) and submitted in typed, double-spaced format and in appropriate APA style. MS Word or Reticulated Text File (.rtf document) is highly encouraged. A writer must be a current member of SCCPA or for multiple authors, at least one writer must be a current member of SCCPA.

Dr. Hilda F. Owens received her doctorate in higher education from Florida State University while serving as a Research Associate and Coordinator for Student Affairs for the State University System of Florida. Dr. Owens moved to South Carolina in 1977 when she joined the faculty at USC-Columbia as an Associate Professor of Higher Education and Student Personnel Services. In 1985, she moved to Spartanburg to expand her administrative experience by becoming Vice President for Academic Affairs at Spartanburg Methodist College.

It is appropriate that the Research/Writing Award carry Dr. Owens' name. Her publication record includes two professional books and over 40 professionally-related book chapters and articles. She has also contributed significantly to the literature via service on the NASPA Monograph Board and the Editorial Boards of the NASPA Journal, the Journal of the Southern Association of College Student Affairs, and the Journal of Staff, Organization and Staff Development where she wrote a regular column for several years entitled "Legal Issues That Affect You." In 1995, an article titled "How College Will Likely Affect Your Life" was published in the National Beta Club Journal.

After leaving SMC in 1990, Dr. Owens became president of Excel Resource Associates, a management consulting and human resource development business based in Spartanburg, SC. She retired in 2003 and resides in North Carolina.

Carol Edens Epps

The Carol Edens Epps Outstanding Graduate Student Award

Purpose: To recognize outstanding contributions and/or potential in the field of student affairs by a graduate student.

Criteria: Nominees must have shown scholarship and potential in the field of student affairs. Nominees must be an enrolled graduate student (masters, Ph.D., or specialist) in a student personnel administration, counseling or higher education program. Nominees must also have completed at least one semester in their program. Membership in SCCPA is not required.

Dr. Carol Edens Epps graduated from Columbia College in 1973 with a B.A. degree in English and began her career in education as a classroom teacher in both public and private secondary schools. She earned an M.Ed. Degree in Reading from USC in 1975 and an M.Ed. In Student Personnel Services in 1979.

Dr. Epps then served for two years as Director of Career Services at Mary Baldwin College in Staunton, Virginia. She returned to South Carolina in 1981 to become Director of Career Planning and Placement at Converse College in Spartanburg. In 1983, she was named Dean of Students at Converse and in 1990 became Vice President for Campus Life/Dean of Students. Dr. Epps was with USC-Spartanburg from 1991-1997, first as a part-time Counselor in Student Affairs, and then as Director of Educational Talent Search, a federally funded program for disadvantaged junior high and high school students. She earned her Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration in 1994. Dr. Epps left USC-Spartanburg in 1997 and returned to Converse as a part-time counselor. In 1999, she became the full-time Director of Counseling at Converse. Dr. Epps began her involvement with SCCPA in the early 1980's and served on numerous committees and in several elected positions, including President from 1990-1991.

Joseph E. Heyward

The Joseph E. Heyward Humanitarian Award

Purpose: To recognize contributions on the part of a student affairs professional to promote understanding and awareness among various and diverse people.

Criteria: Nominees must have demonstrated a commitment to promote understanding and awareness among various and diverse people through research, programming, or activities. Membership in SCCPA is required.

Dr. Joseph E. Heyward graduated from the Hampton Institute (VA) with a B.S. in Mathematics, and he continued his education at Morgan State University (MD) where he received a M.A. in Mathematics. In 1987, Dr. Heyward completed his Ed.D. at the University of South Carolina. The majority of Dr. Heyward's professional career has been spent serving the citizens of Florence, SC and the students at Francis Marion University.

After teaching, serving as assistant principal and principal in the public schools of Virginia and South Carolina, Dr. Heyward joined the staff at Francis Marion University in 1973 and served in a variety of capacities including Assistant Dean of Student Affairs, Academic Counselor and as an instructor of mathematics. After a brief hiatus from the staff at Francis Marion, Dr. Heyward returned in 1983 where he held the positions of Vice President for College Activities (1983-1992) and Provost and Vice President for University Activities (1992-1993). Since 1993, Dr. Heyward has alternately served as the Chief Academic Officer and Vice President for Student Affairs as the needs of the institution dictated.

As impressive as Dr. Heyward's professional activities are his civic activities. Dr. Heyward has been involved with a variety of civic organizations including People to People (board member), Heart to Heart (advisory board), Chairman of Pelican House, Inc., Housing for the Aged, the NAACP (chairman, Education Committee), Boy Scouts of America, and Chairperson of the Pee Dee Housing Development Corporation. He currently serves as the Lay Leader for the South Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Joseph O. Nixon

The Joseph O. Nixon Award for Chief Student Affairs Officer

Purpose: To recognize chief student affairs professionals in the state of South Carolina who have made outstanding contributions to their campus and the field of student affairs.

Criteria: The nominees must have been employed as a chief student affairs professional at their institution for at least five years. Nominees should demonstrate an effort to recruit professionals to the profession of student affairs, show a commitment to students and demonstrate leadership for student affairs professionals in the state of South Carolina. Membership in SCCPA is not required.

(The following material was adapted from a resolution honoring Joe Nixon by the Presbyterian College Board of Trustees dated February 26, 2002.)

Joe Nixon's life became forever tied to Presbyterian College in 1958 when he enrolled as the quintessential student-athlete, proving his steadfast commitment to learning in the classroom and his athletic skill as a member of the 1960 Blue Hose Tangerine Bowl team and as captain of the 1962 team. Upon returning to his alma mater in 1965 following two years of active military duty, Joe began a 37-year career of remarkable service to his alma mater in the areas of athletics, admissions, and, beginning in 1977, in student life. He served as an Officer of the College – first as Dean of Students and then as Vice President for Student Life – giving of himself tirelessly and with devotion to the advancement of his College. His love of Presbyterian College is equaled by his love of country, as evidenced by his 28-year career in the South Carolina Army National Guard, during which he completed advanced officer courses, rose to the rank of Brigadier General, and was commander of the 228th Signal Brigade at the time of his retirement. In 2002 Joe retired from his position at Presbyterian College.

Joe was an active supporter of SCCPA from the time of its founding until his retirement; he participated in many of the annual conferences over the years, and served as president of the organization in 1991-1992.