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### Former Prairie State President Joins SXL Faculty

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University Park, IL,  
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2020

# Former Prairie State President Joins SXL Faculty



Anyone who has ever met [Dr. Terri Winfree](#) will tell you that *she cares*.

Her desire to impact the lives of others in the community is evident in both her professional life and how she spends her personal time. A member of Rotary International, a long-time adjunct professor and a curious student of what makes people tick, Winfree's passion is the classroom. This passion now brings her to the [School of Extended Learning](#) (SXL) at [Governors State University](#) as its newest faculty member. A GSU alumna, Dr. Winfree will be returning to teach on a topic she knows well— leadership.

Dr. Winfree found her niche in leadership on a tip from a talented HR Director in the '90s. "I was deciding on a path of either administration or teaching," Winfree recalls. The

director said, “Terri, you are an administrator. You are a leader. You can still teach part-time.”

That moment was pivotal—it set her on a path to leadership and eventually to the office of President of Prairie State College in Chicago Heights, Illinois, where she recently culminated a 25-year career and impacted thousands of young future leaders. Now, her next chapter brings together her passion for helping others through education with insights from her successful career in academic leadership.

Amidst global coronavirus pandemic and traumatic news of racial intolerance, leadership skills have never been more important. SXL recently spoke with Dr. Winfree about her new SXL course series, which includes [Leading through Crisis and Change](#) and [John Maxwell’s Developing The Leader Within You](#).

Here is what we learned:

**SXL:** How do you define leadership?

**TW:** When you see something that needs to be done, and you get involved. You get on board to make an impact.

**SXL:** Is leadership different in a crisis than during calmer times?

**TW:** I think people need to see you. Leaders need to be seen and seen consistently. They need to provide regular updates and guidance, be authentic, stay calm, and share what is relevant with the appropriate groups. And make sure information sources are accurate before you share! Social media is not always a verifiable source. If you don’t know something, say you don’t know it, and then work to communicate the truth.

**SXL:** Are there things you look for in emerging leaders?

**TW:** People who show up, and integrity. You know the saying, *integrity is doing the right thing when no one is looking*.

**SXL:** And eventually people will notice?

**TW:** That’s right.

**SXL:** I know this is a tough question to narrow down, but what has been your proudest moment as a leader?

**TW:** Without question, graduation! You get to know these students, and their barriers. To hand them a diploma is powerful. I recently got to hand a diploma to a person who had been incarcerated. That person had a ton of barriers but persevered and now holds an associate degree.

**SXL:** Any other advice for leaders and emerging leaders?

**TW:** Leaders don’t need to be right. They need to *get it right, especially when no one is looking*.

Learn more from Dr. Terri Winfree by enrolling in [Leading through Crisis and Change](#) and [John Maxwell's Developing The Leader Within You](#).

For a complete list of programs offered at School of Extended Learning (SXL), visit [www.govst.edu/sxl](http://www.govst.edu/sxl)