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### **GSU Connections: Terri Winfree**

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# GSU Connections: Terri Winfree



Being the first in her family to attend college, Terri Winfree was like many students who enroll at [Prairie State College](#) (PSC). For her, it was the first step on a remarkable path that to her doctorate and then back to PSC, where Winfree was named as the first female president in 2013, and the first PSC graduate to be named head of the Chicago Heights-based community college.

Earning a Board of Governors degree in 1998 and [Master of Arts in Communication Studies](#) (Human Performance and Training) in 2000 at [Governors State University](#) enabled Winfree to write her own story. It's a story that resonates with so many students who pursued a college education as part-time, adult students with other responsibilities.

## **Describe your current position.**

In 2020, I retired as president of [Prairie State College](#) (PSC), which has the most geographically, socioeconomically, and racially diverse community college in Illinois. I

have the pleasure of overseeing the academic and co-curricular program, as well as serving the community where I have lived my entire life.

### **How did you get into this line of work?**

I came to Prairie State as a returning adult student. I was a business owner in the district who wanted to attend the college to take computer classes to help to computerize the business. While taking classes, I began working at Prairie State on a part-time basis. Holding entry-level positions at first, I continued through several promotions over the years. Some of my positions have included Dean of Continuing Professional Education, Vice President of Community and Economic Development, and finally, in 2013, I became the first female President of PSC.

### **Why did you choose GSU?**

I chose GSU because of the convenience and stayed because of the fabulous faculty. There were so many returning adult students that I felt I was exactly where I needed to be. The faculty were talented and welcoming and the classroom settings were conducive to great discussion and debate.

### **What role did GSU play in your success?**

GSU allowed me to continue my education while working and raising a family. I would likely not have been as successful if they did not offer the evening and weekend classes that allowed me to continue my education while balancing life outside the classroom. Furthermore, the education I received provided a great foundation for me to move into my doctoral program.

### **What are you most proud of when you look back at your GSU experience?**

I think I am most proud of the relationships with the students and faculty that I am still in communication with today. The comradery was life-changing for me during that time of my life. I would add that eventually, I started teaching as an adjunct at GSU. This naturally adds additional fond memories for me for the university.

### **What advice would you share with current GSU students?**

Enjoy the process and try not to stress. Ask questions in class and spend time on campus outside of classroom time. That helps you to build relationships with people on the campus. Those relationships will help provide you the support you need to succeed.