



To: RUSH University Community

From: Rick Sumner, PhD, The Mary Lou Bell McGrew
Presidential Professor for Medical Research,
Professor and Chairperson, Department of Anatomy
& Cell Biology

Re: Retirement of James M. Williams, PhD, This Month

Date: June 8, 2022



We are approaching another milestone, as Jim Williams, PhD, director of the Human Anatomy Laboratory will be retiring from RUSH University on June 30 after 38 years here. Jim has served as the anatomy lab's director since 2004, and he was the inaugural director of the Section of Clinical Anatomy (now called the Section of Anatomy Education).

While the early part of Jim's career at the University was research-focused, he has had substantial teaching duties for nearly four decades. He is beloved by hundreds if not thousands of students. Indeed, at least one RUSH couple asked Jim to officiate at their wedding!

Jim repeatedly has been honored by the students of Rush Medical College: He was selected five different times to give the welcoming address to the incoming class; was awarded the Nathan Smith Davis Award from the Alternative Curriculum Class of 2000; was inducted into the Mark Lepper, MD, Society of Teachers in 2000 and served as the president of that society in 2004-2005; and was selected as the hooder for the class of 2006.

Jim has also been honored by the students of the Graduate College as the hooder of Master of Science anatomy students in 2004, and he received the Exceptional Mentor Award for the Graduate College in 2006. He has also been honored multiple times by the College of Health Sciences: He was chosen for the Academic Excellence Training award from the Physician Assistant Studies Program of the College of Health Sciences in 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2017. He also was elected to give the commencement address to the graduating class of the Physician Assistant Studies Program in 2015 and 2016 and was honored with

the Physician Assistant Program PA Advocate Award by the 2019 graduating class. In addition, Jim received the Leonidas H. Berry Faculty Award for multiculturalism in 2014 and the Rush Community Service Initiatives Program Community Service Award in 2020.

Jim has played a key role in the world-renowned osteoarthritis research group at RUSH University, which was centered in the Department of Biochemistry. He was a longtime collaborator with RUSH luminaries, including his good friend Eugene Thonar, PhD, a now-retired RUSH professor of biochemistry and orthopedic surgery, with whom Jim published many papers.

In this context, Jim served as the principal investigator or co-investigator on multiple National Institutes of Health-funded projects. He has written 78 peer-reviewed manuscripts, eight book chapters and 106 meeting abstracts. He received numerous extramural research grants, including key components of NIH Specialized Centers of Research grants on osteoarthritis. He was also funded by the Arthritis Foundation and many companies. He was well-known for his work on a rabbit model of osteoarthritis.

Jim served as a site visitor for the U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs and the American Physical Therapy Association. He reviewed manuscripts for many scientific journals. Other extramural activities included serving as a boccia coach for the United States Paralympic Team, beginning in 2004; being recognized by the Robert Morris University Board of Trustees for service to the university in 2008; and serving on the Board of Trustees of the University of Medicine and Health Sciences in St. Kitts since 2014. Jim is currently the president of that board.

Jim rarely said no to a request and served on innumerable departmental, college and University committees. He has had a subtle but firm hand in many aspects of academic life at RUSH University. He was instrumental in the early days of the alternative curriculum at RUSH, a problem-based method that was considered

avant-garde at the time. He took on those duties even though he had been recruited to the University for research and traditional teaching.

Many students and faculty have sought wisdom from Jim. He is always available to help and takes genuine interest in the life stories he hears from the University community. As might be expected for someone with his philosophy and gregariousness, there aren't many in the RUSH academic community who were untouched by his generosity.

Jim earned his PhD in anatomy at Indiana University School of Medicine (IU) in 1980. He did post-doctoral work in rheumatology at IU and was an Arthritis Foundation Postdoctoral Fellow from 1981 to 1984.

He came to RUSH University as an assistant professor in 1984, was promoted and served as an associate professor from 1992 to 2001, and has been a full professor since 2001 in the Department of Anatomy & Cell Biology. Jim held conjoint appointments in the Department of Internal Medicine (Rheumatology) and the Department of Biochemistry.

On behalf of everyone at RUSH, I profoundly thank Jim for his extraordinary service and dedication and wish him all the best in the future.