

# Former athlete earns doctorate from UNLV

## Three-time All-American football player reaches goal, earns 'doctor' title

By Huel Washington  
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Although he entered college as a much sought after student-athlete, William L. Taylor Jr., always placed his classroom studies at the top of his achievement list. His prowess was on the gridiron as Billy Taylor.

There was nothing unusual about Taylor graduating with his 1972 University of Michigan class with a Bachelor of Science in education. A few years later, he earned his Master's degree from Michigan. Now, to complete his educational accomplishments, the three-time All-American recently earned his doctorate in education at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas.

Taylor's latest achievement, however, must be considered with the highest regard. He completed his dissertation and doctoral requirements 25 years after his second degree.

On a visit to Las Vegas in

1998, he left the Strip and was overwhelmed by the city's less-publicized areas. That same year his marriage to Cheryl ended. Their children William III, Alden James, and Mariah Marie, all currently reside in Detroit, where Taylor formerly taught school.

"I saw children, schools, playgrounds, homes and other things that you didn't hear existed when people talked about Las Vegas," Taylor said about that jaunt away from the Strip. "Then I read in the local paper that as many as 9,700 youngsters had been added to the school rolls in one year. It seemed unreal," he said. "And schools in Detroit were closing."

He packed up his 1988 Pontiac, following the immortal words of Horace Greeley: "Go west, young man."

Taylor is currently compliance officer and academic advisor in the department of athletics at the Community



Former University of Michigan football player William Taylor recently earned his doctoral degree in education from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

College of Southern Nevada's Cheyenne campus.

"This is where I wanted to be," he said. "When I first

arrived in Las Vegas, I took a job as a substitute teacher several times. But I was interested in a position at the

community college level. When he heard a job was open, he applied and was accepted. He also found out that

faculty members and administrators were given financial assistance if they wanted to pursue a higher degree.

Since Taylor already had attained 30 credits or one half of those needed to complete his doctorate, he applied and was accepted into the program at the UNLV. Later, when he stepped on the stage to receive his hood, Taylor was assisted by Dr. Paul E. Meacham, former president of the university.

"This has been my goal for years," Taylor said, "ever since I was a little kid and heard people refer to Martin Luther King Jr. as 'Doctor.'"

The youngest of seven children, three boys and three girls, Taylor, 54, first saw the light of day in Hoxie, Ark. Mariah, his mother, gave birth to William, at her mother, Georgia Wells' home, before returning to her home in Memphis, Tenn.

Subsequently the Taylors moved to Barberton, Ohio, (See Taylor, Page 17)

# Wilson blazes new academic trail at black university

## First Black woman to receive doctorate in medicinal chemistry from Florida A&M

By Monica Steward

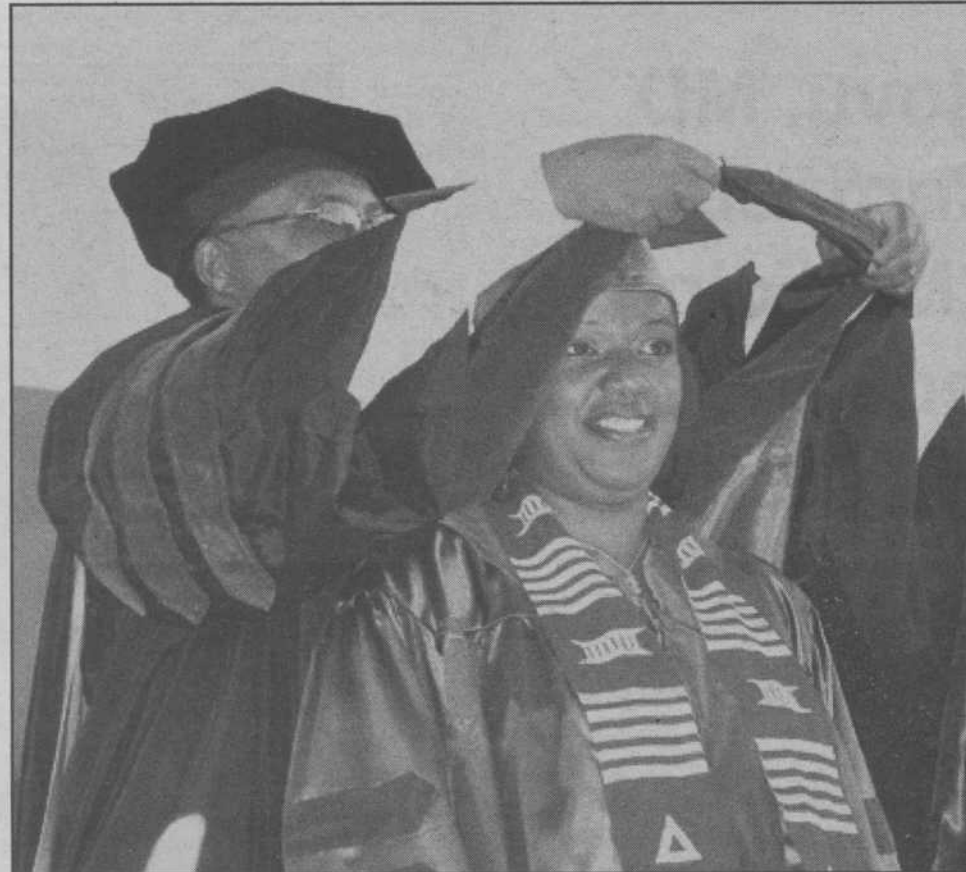
TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (NNPA) — Tiffany Wilson is a pioneer.

She has gone where no woman and no Black person has gone before at Florida A&M University, and plans to break a new path in her field.

During FAMU's commencement exercises recently, Wilson became the first woman and first Black person at FAMU to earn a Ph.D. in medicinal chemistry. She researched the development of anti-inflammatory medicine without the use of steroids and her dissertation was on 23 novel tetrahydropyridine derivative, an area, according to her professors, in which no one else has done a documented study, making Wilson the world's only expert.

Wilson exemplifies a true 'Rattler' by having starting at FAMU Developmental Research School and finishing at the university right across the street.

After receiving her master's in pharmaceutical sciences with a concentration in medicinal chemistry in 1998, Wilson realized she only had a few courses, plus research and dissertation, to earn her doctorate.



Florida A&M University pharmacy Prof. Ken Redda hoods graduate Tiffany Wilson.

"My steps are ordered by the Lord," Wilson said. Her path is now leading her to Washington, D.C., where she will begin a two-year postdoctoral training program at Howard University. Her focus at Howard will be on molecular modeling and bioinformatics, in which she will use a computer to help design drugs to aid in spe-

cific illnesses. Her goal is to become a medicinal chemistry professor and direct a research laboratory. Her desire is to design and develop drugs that will cure or alleviate medical complications such as arthritis, sickle cell and cancer.

"It is such a pleasure to know that I have found and am walking the Lord's path,"

she said. She believes there is a calling for her life to heal through medication.

"I'm excited," she said referring to becoming the first Black woman in her field and starting on her research to find medications to help people live more comfortably. "I'm proud to be in that position."

Wilson was among 1,175

graduates at Bragg Stadium May 3. The evening commencement marked the first time in FAMU history that graduation exercises were held outside at night.

Commencement speaker Tom Joyner joked about the time change. He turned to FAMU President Fred Gainous and asked, "Did you change it to the evening because of the heat or was it to give everybody a chance to get in their last assignments in or, better yet, was it planned this way so you can sleep off all that partying you did last night?"

Joyner, host of radio's nationally syndicated "The

Tom Joyner Morning Show," used humor to keep the crowd's attention throughout his address.

He began his speech by mentioning his son Oscar Joyner, a 1998 FAMU graduate. "Now after sending all those tuition checks throughout my son's undergraduate and graduate school years, let me say it may have been the best investment I ever made," he said. "He is now my boss."

Joyner added that his son got the job because he was well qualified.

"And he is well qualified because he is a graduate of Florida A&M."

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