

# WALTER

PEARSON, '90



The **Distinguished Alumnus Award** recognizes Park University alumni who have distinguished themselves through career, service or community achievements.

**“Where there’s a will, there’s a way” is more than a motto for Walter Pearson, '90, who knows what it takes to make things happen.** I’ve always been driven by my faith, family and friends — like an unending proposition — to find ways to fix and improve things to impact people’s lives,” he said.

Raised by his grandmother during the 1960s, Pearson said he persevered through life’s challenges with a love of education and knowledge, always striving to make a difference. Though he retired in February as the assistant commissioner for the State of Missouri’s Office of Administration, Pearson will never retire from what drives him forward in life.

## MAKING THINGS HAPPEN

During Pearson’s tenure in Jefferson City, Mo., he provided administrative leadership to three of the State of Missouri’s executive branches: Department of Economic Development, Department of Natural Resources and the Office of Administration.

In 1994, Pearson served as the assistant director of the Missouri Department of Economic Development where he oversaw the Missouri Division of Tourism, Missouri Arts Council, Missouri Film Commission and Missouri Minority Business Advocacy Commission. In 1998, he was appointed by Gov. Mel Carnahan to serve as the director of business and urban affairs for the Missouri Department of Natural Resources. In 2009, Pearson was appointed as the assistant commissioner for the Missouri Office of Administration, where he was responsible for the Division of Personnel, Division of Purchasing and Office of Equal Opportunity.

After more than 26 years in public administration and 11 prior years in corporate management, Pearson reflects on his first and most valued accomplishment: education.

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“I was fortunate to attend Park and complete a Bachelor of Science degree in business administration. And I was especially proud to be the first in my family to graduate from college,” said Pearson, who went on to earn a master’s degree in public administration. “Park gave me the opportunity to be my best — and I took advantage of it.”

Education is a value Pearson instilled in his three children: Carla Walker, '99, also a proud Park graduate; Angela Pearson, who graduated from Missouri State University in Springfield; and Walter Michael Pearson, who graduated from Howard University in Washington, D.C. “Education is the cornerstone for the rest of your life,” he said. “No one can take it from you.”

## A ROLE MOLDER

With his success in the public sector, Pearson considers himself to be a role model — although he prefers the term “role molder.” “A role model is someone looked to by others as an example to be imitated. But a role molder gets involved and provides assistance and input,” he said. “This kind of personal connection makes more sense to me.”

While growing up and raising his family in Kansas City, Mo., Pearson’s list of role-molding volunteer work is long, but he’s particularly proud to be a founding board member of the Kansas City Media Project and the Jefferson City Boys and Girls Clubs. He’s also served as a board member for the Bruce R. Watkins Culture Heritage Center and the Jefferson City NAACP.

## WHAT MATTERS

Learning is a way of life for Pearson. “I’m always thinking and starting conversations,” said Pearson, who created KPRS-FM’s first call-in talk show, “Point/Counterpoint,” to encourage thoughtful community discussions in Kansas City.

Pearson, who lives in Jefferson City with his wife, Virginia, is now enjoying the freedom to travel. “Retirement is just another step in life’s challenges and we all should look forward to it,” he said. He also enjoys time with his seven beautiful grandchildren.

But Pearson said it won’t be long before he’s back in the mix, helping people, in whatever way he can. Until then, Pearson is living his lifelong philosophy: “Learning — and sharing ideas about what we’ve learned — is how we make a difference. It’s what matters. It’s what remains.”

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