SCF Professor Mentors
First-Generation College Graduate

Isera Tyson-Miller, State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota (SCF) language and literature professor, belongs to a distinguished lineage of faculty members who have cemented SCF’s longstand- ing reputation for making an indelible mark on students. An SCF alum and lifelong Manatee County resident, Tyson-Miller credits her success to mentors and teachers whose influence continues to inspire her as a professor. Tyson-Miller, who in 2004 was SCF’s first African-American female to be promoted to full professor, was taught and mentored by Constance Gillyard, the first African-American male to earn the distinction at SCF. Tyson-Miller leads her students by example, practicing lifelong learning as an avid reader and staying up-to-date on teaching trends to implement strategies that capture students’ attention. Her greatest reward is watching students graduate from SCF and earn exceptional grades when they transfer to four-year universities.

“Sometimes I tap dance on the desk if that’s what it takes to teach them about comma splices, paragraph development and supporting ideas. I want to make sure they acquire the best education that SCF can offer even if it means I sometimes tap dance on the desk,” Tyson-Miller said.

Tyson-Miller has continued the SCF tradition of showing an interest in students’ lives beyond the classroom by serving as a faculty mentor for student-athletes through the Intercollegiate Athletic Committee. On the court, petite Tyson-Miller cranes her neck to maintain eye contact with basketball players who tower above her. But off the court, they look up to her as a role model and stalwart supporter.

SCF Basketball player and May 2013 graduate Denzel Meyers credits Tyson-Miller for helping him become the first in his family to graduate from college. Thanks to her persistence in motivating him academically, he is continuing his education this fall at Lander University in South Carolina on a basketball scholarship.

Tyson-Miller was recognized by the SCF District Board of Trustees for her investment in student-athletes, and she has already signed up to mentor an incoming SCF basketball player. Tyson-Miller’s dedication to helping students succeed grows from her own experience as a student at SCF (then Manatee Junior College). In addition to her parents, she leaned on mentors including retired SCF Associate Dean James Brown and Family Heritage House Museum Colosander Fredi Brown. Fredi Brown, who also expanded opportunities for minority students as an equal access/equal opportunity officer at SCF in the 1970s, continues to encourage Tyson-Miller to persevere and overcome obstacles in life.

Tyson-Miller graduated from SCF in 1980, earned her bachelor’s degree in business from Florida State University and began working for Inter City Bank. Not long after taking the job, she heeded a former professor’s advice to major in English and enter teaching even though she knew it was not a lucrative field. In 1986, Tyson-Miller returned to her alma mater, SCF, as an English instructor. She later earned her master’s degree in English from the University of South Florida and is working on a doctorate from Barry University.

Despite her busy schedule, Tyson-Miller always finds time to help students, especially those who need her the most. Committed to seeing her students succeed, Miller said, “I do not expect failure from any student, and I do not allow my students to fail.”

Name
Isera Tyson-Miller, SCF language and literature professor

Courses: African-American Literature and Written Communication I & II

Years at SCF
27 years

Extracurricular involvement: ABC for Kids Writing Contest judge, 11th Avenue Youth Center mentor, and member of the SCF Promotion Committee and Curriculum Development Committee.

Awards/Extracurricular involvement:
- USF (Sarasota) Distinguished Alumni Award, 2002
- nSOD Award for Excellence in Teaching, 2000
- National Council of Black American Authors Southern Region Johnnie Ruth Clarke Award for Excellence in Teaching, 1999
- Who’s Who Among America’s Professors
- Member, Phi Theta Kappa and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, one of the largest African-American women’s organizations in the world.

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