



2022 Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award Gary Simrill '91

Each year, Winthrop University recognizes an alumnus for selfless dedication of time, energy and talent in service to this institution and others. The Algernon Sydney Sullivan Award captures this high honor.

The 2022 recipient is Gary Simrill '91, a dedicated public servant and native of Rock Hill, South Carolina. Due to family circumstances, he was forced to put himself through college. He started on his degree in 1984 and graduated in 1991 with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration as Winthrop was on the cusp of transitioning from a college to a university. He has since received four Honorary Doctorate degrees – from Winthrop, College of Charleston, The Citadel and the Medical University of South Carolina.

Simrill served in the General Assembly for 30 years representing S.C. House 46, retiring in 2022 as the longest serving Republican in the S.C. House.

He served an unprecedented three terms as Majority Leader, as chair of the powerful Ways and Means Committee, and chair of the Ways and Means budget subcommittee on higher education. Normally a Majority Leader in the S.C. House can only serve two two-year terms for a limit of four years; however, those rules were suspended to allow Simrill to serve a third term.

He led the Higher Education Budget Committee instituting tuition mitigation and providing capital funding for campus infrastructure. He also served as Vice Chair of the Joint Bond Review Committee, member of State Fiscal Accountability Authority, Agency Head Salary Commission, South Carolina Transportation Infrastructure Bank Board and Port Oversight.

Simrill said he never sought leadership positions in the S.C. General Assembly, but others encouraged his talents. Colleagues speak of Simrill's institutional knowledge of the General Assembly, of his persistence and his consensus-building.

Just a few of Simrill's high-profile achievements include: serving as the primary sponsor of the Infrastructure and Economic Development Act of 2017 that increased the gas tax to pay for much-needed road widening and repaving projects; working on a bi-partisan initiative to give colleges and universities more money for technology, deferred maintenance and capital needs if the institutions keep tuition low; and, most recently, fighting for and winning \$26 million for Winthrop in that endeavor.

He has received leadership awards from the Riley Institute at Furman University; Maritime Association, Behavioral Health Services; The American Legion; Clemson University and from the South Carolina Advocates for Agriculture. He was inducted in the Society of the Maltese Cross by the SC Firefighters Association and received the Lawrimore-Craven leadership award for tourism promotion.

In July 2022, Simrill embarked on a new career with the Winthrop University President's Office as special assistant to the president for community engagement. He works closely with Dr. Edward Serna to tell others about the Winthrop story, its welcoming campus community and its willingness to work with others.

He looks forward to bringing politicians, community leaders, college presidents and others to visit the campus to collaborate on partnerships or to participate in a speaker series with the university-based John C. West Forum on Politics and Policy. Three specific areas he will address include reaching out to business partners, employers and entrepreneurs in York County, political leaders and those at other higher education institutions to work on degrees and cost saving measures.

In Oct. 2022, he received the Order of the Palmetto from S.C. Governor Henry McMaster for his S.C. General Assembly work. The award is the highest civilian award given to a South Carolina resident.



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Gary is married to Mary Ruth Dobson Simrill, Winthrop Class of 1993. They have three children, Mallory (26), Sarah Kate (24) and Dozier (19).