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Marie Cowart

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Marie Cowart began her career at Florida State in 1968 in the School of Nursing, ultimately becoming a professor of nursing, professor of urban and regional planning and a member of the Institute on Aging and Public Policy. She served as director of the Pepper Institute on Aging and as dean of the College of Social Sciences.

Marie Cowart named 2019 Volunteer of the Year at Westminster Oaks



Former FSU Dean of the College of Social Sciences, Director of the Pepper Institute on Aging and Public Policy, and professor, Dr. Marie Cowart, was selected as 2019 Volunteer of the Year at Westminster Oaks.

Dr. Cowart has been a valuable part of the Re-Development Committee that is instrumental in planning the new Memory Care Center at Westminster Oaks, scheduled to break ground this spring. She has also served on the retirement community's Health Services Advisory Committee for 10 years and is a past president of the resident council. She was pivotal in establishing the Arts Council, which oversees a rotating show of local artists in the main dining room.

Dr. Cowart continues to serve the Tallahassee community as a part of Serving Health Insurance Needs of the Elderly (SHINE), a program of the Department of Elder Affairs and the local Area Agency on Aging that provides free counseling on Medicare and other health-insurance issues for people living in the 14 counties of the Florida Big Bend.

Of her many years of volunteer service, Dr. Cowart says, "I never volunteer in isolation, it is always in teams. It is a joy to do things with people I will be living with the rest of my life. Volunteerism is just one of the things that make Westminster Oaks such a special place."

Dr. Cowart will be honored at the annual ceremony at Westminster Properties in Orlando, in March, 2020.

Marie talking about Claude Pepper.

<https://claudepepperfoundation.org/videos/marie-cowart/>



After more than a decade of hospital nursing and administration, in 1968 Marie Cowart began her career at Florida State in the School of Nursing as part of an early distance learning grant to make instructional videos for seventeen community colleges in Florida. She then taught public health nursing, became a professor of nursing, and a fellow of the Academy of Nursing. In 1985 she became the director of the Multidisciplinary Center on Gerontology, now the Pepper Institute on Aging and Public Policy. There she grew the Institute from one half time position to ten faculty and brought in over \$10 million dollars in extramural funding and administered several millions in gifts. She served on numerous doctoral and masters students' committees and has an extensive list of publications. In 1990 she was invited to join the Department of Urban and Regional Planning as professor of planning. With the need to have space for the Institute, she developed a proposal that was funded by the Florida Legislature and became the Pepper Center. She chaired the building committee.

Her involvement in the community included being a founding board member of the Neighborhood Health Clinic, a trustee of the TMH Foundation and the Tallahassee Senior Foundation. She served on a number of statewide boards including President of the Florida Nurses Association, member of the Governor's Task Force on Competition and Consumer Costs in Health Care, the Hospital Cost Containment Board, Commission on End-of-Life Care and the Governor's Task Force on Excellence in Nursing Home Care. At the national level she was an accreditation visitor for the National League of Nursing and on several American Nurses Association Committees to establish standards for nurse practitioners as well as a proposal reviewer for the CDC, NIH Panel on Preventive Health. She was a delegate to the White House Conference on Aging in 2005.

Always active in campus committees, she served on the Senate steering committee for many years becoming Faculty Senate President in 1996-1998. In 1999-2003 she

served as Dean of the College of Social Sciences. In the first D.R.O.P. class, she was required to retire. She was honored by her colleagues with both Professor Emerita and Dean Emerita as well as a scholarship in her name. She continued to teach via distance learning, giving a total of 49 years of service to FSU. She has received the Torch and Circle of Gold awards.

Extensive travelers, she and her husband, Jim Cowart, Professor of Geology, spent their retirement years continuing to explore the world until his death in 2008. In 2010 she moved to Westminster Oaks where many other faculty and staff live. There she has been active on many committees including serving as President of the Residents' Council, the Health Services Advisory Committee, and the Redevelopment Committee that advises on capital improvement projects, most recently the Parking Garage, the Canopy Oaks apartments, and the Memory Care Center. In 2019 she was named Volunteer of the Year.

Marie was born in New Jersey and grew up in St. Petersburg. Her degrees are from the University of Florida, Tulane University and Columbia University. Her two sons live nearby, and she has three grandchildren.

Why I came to FSU and became a professor?

This story begins in Gainesville where I met and married Jim Cowart. I was completing my BS and Jim was finishing his Masters' Degree. It was the early sixties, and we took it for granted that he would seek a job to begin his career and I would be the trailing spouse. And so, as we neared graduation we began to talk about how we would lay out the future. We both wanted to explore for a few years, but

because we loved Florida we wanted to return one day. Jim had spent his life in Miami, and I most of mine in St. Petersburg. Each of us had had experience in Tallahassee. Jim went to Boys' State and I spent two summers taking courses at FSU. We loved the change of seasons, the tall trees and hills, things that neither Miami nor St. Pete had. That was our first goal. The second was that we would both get our doctorates and teach at FSU. That goal was more complex. We were both the first in our immediate family to go to college. Jim had an uncle he admired who was a professor at the University of Chicago. His experience with faculty in geology was positive. I had some parttime teaching experience with hospital nurses, and expectant parents. I also had my fill of working weekends, nights and evenings. Although I liked administration, I did not see that as a career path. Besides, Jim wanted to become a professor, so why shouldn't I? We could be together. So, after six years living out of state in Mississippi and Louisiana, we returned to Florida, found a sweet little home on the edge of campus, and Jim began his doctoral studies while I began my journey in the School of Nursing. Ou