



THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

## SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING

### 2023 - 2024 Vice Admiral Mel Williams Leadership Excellence Award

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The **Vice Admiral Mel Williams Leadership Excellence Award** is to recognize and support graduate students pursuing a degree at the Catholic University of America School of Engineering who personify **leadership excellence** and who embody the leadership characteristics (as identified in *Navigating the Seven Seas*, Admiral William's book) of moral and ethical **Character** – *integrity, determination, a positive attitude, humility, and servant leadership*; and **Competence** – continued *progress* in development as a leader (preparedness for current and future career opportunities), *performance* (demonstrates leadership excellence while achieving desired effectiveness), *judgment* (demonstrates sound judgement as a leader in support of the organization), and *continual improvement* (helps to lead positive organizational change towards improvement).\*

This award is intended to *inspire and promote Excellence in Leadership*, by current and future leaders in the engineering disciplines as enabled by graduate education, and to *encourage other alumni and donors* to recognize and support *graduate students at the Catholic University of America*.

Vice Admiral Mel Williams Leaders will be nominated based on academic achievement, demonstrated leadership, and/or the potential for future leadership in the engineering disciplines.

Two (2) doctoral candidates and two (2) master's degree students may be selected to receive the Vice Admiral Mel Williams Leadership Excellence Award each year.

1. Eligibility:

- a. Any graduate student in the School of Engineering in good standing at the time of application and award, and who exemplifies excellence in leadership per the aforementioned description.
- b. Doctoral candidates should/will be involved in research activities with a faculty mentor.
- c. Master's degree student nominees are eligible and should not compete with the doctoral candidate nominees.

2. Nomination:

- a. Nominees should be invited by faculty from the nominee's home department or department of their faculty advisor or mentor.
- b. In order to be considered for the award, nominations must include:
  - i. Completed nomination form (by student and endorsed by faculty sponsor).
  - ii. Current transcript (if incoming student, transcript at preceding institution).
  - iii. One 250-word essay addressing current leadership abilities (as demonstrated by specific examples) and/or future leadership potential (addressing the aforementioned characteristics as found within the nominee).
  - iv. Recommendation of current/former professional leadership (employment) and/or current /former faculty (academic), both with appropriate knowledge of nominees' character based on the aforementioned characteristics.

\* Nominees and candidates may refer to the leadership book, *Navigating the Seven Seas* (Williams and Williams, 2011) for further description of leadership and key characteristics based on the experiences of the authors.

**ALL APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS MUST BE FULLFILLED. INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED FOR THE SELECTION PROCESS.**

3. Selection:

- a. Selection is made by the School of Engineering Scholarship Committee.
- b. Selection is based on the applicant's academic excellence in leadership, irrespective of financial need.

4. Sponsor:

Vice Admiral, US Navy (retired) Melvin G. Williams, Jr., graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy (Bachelor of Science degree in Mathematics), he holds a Master of Science degree in Engineering from the Catholic University of America (later receiving the Catholic University of America 2012 Engineering Distinguished Alumni Award), and he attended Harvard's JFK School of Government (National & International Security). A nuclear-trained submariner, his US Navy service included one year as an enlisted sailor and 32 years as a commissioned officer.

In 1994, he became the first African American in history to Command a Nuclear Powered Strategic Ballistic Missile submarine (USS NEBRASKA - SSBN 739 Gold crew). As Commanding Officer, his team earned the top US Navy and US Air Force Strategic Performance Award in the Nation (the Omaha Trophy), becoming the first Ohio-class submarine in history to win the prestigious Omaha Trophy award for excellence. He is one of the U.S. Navy "Centennial Seven"- first seven African Americans to Command a U.S. Navy submarine in the first 100-year history of the Submarine Force.

In 2006, he became the sixth African American in US Navy's history to reach Vice Admiral rank (3 stars) and served as Deputy Commander US Fleet Forces Command. In 2008 he became the Commander U.S. Second Fleet - 130 ships and over 90,000 sailors and marines, and he concurrently served as the Director, Combined Joint Operations from the Sea Center of Excellence - in support of NATO's transformation in Maritime operations.

He and his Father are co-authors of the leadership book, *Navigating the Seven Seas*. Since 2012 the book has been on the "US Navy Reading Program" list, and in 2019 it made the list of "Washington Bestsellers Top 10 non-fiction books". They are the only African American Father and Son in U.S. Navy history whereby the Father reached a top Enlisted rank (E-9) and Son reached a top Officer rank (O-9).

Vice Admiral Mel Williams served in various leadership roles after the US Navy, including:

- *Associate Deputy Secretary of Energy* (number three official), the Presidential Appointee responsible for day-to-day Management and Operational Excellence at the US Department of Energy.
- Academic Administrator in Higher Education for 10 years, including *Associate Dean of Engineering at the Catholic University of America*.
- Energy, Defense, and Education related Boards, including the *Board of Trustees for the Catholic University of America*.

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Nomination Form for the  
2024 Vice Admiral Mel Williams Leadership Excellence Award

A. Personal

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Last) (First) (Middle)

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

B. Education

Institution	Degree Awarded	Degree Date

C. Current Academic Information:

Major: \_\_\_\_\_ Degree Program (Masters or PhD): \_\_\_\_\_

Research Area:\* \_\_\_\_\_ Research Supervisor:\* \_\_\_\_\_

\*Applies to PhD nominees only

GPA: \_\_\_\_\_ Expected Graduation Date (month/year): \_\_\_\_\_

Previous Degree (BS or MS): \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

C. Honors & Awards

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

D. Application Documents: Attach leadership essay, recommendation, and transcript(s) with this nomination form.

I hereby state that this application and all supporting documents are true and valid, and may be used for the purpose of evaluation and selection for the Vice Admiral Mel Williams Leadership Excellence Award.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I hereby nominate and endorse this student for the Vice Admiral Mel Williams Leadership Excellence Award. The student meets the selection criteria for the Vice Admiral Mel Williams Leadership Excellence Award.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Faculty Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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