

# Shawnee State University

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SUBJECT:	VERNAL G. RIFFE JR. FOUNDERS' MEDAL	APPROVED BY:.	

## 1.0 Introduction

Every organization, including universities, have their start by the vision of an individual or group of individuals. Shawnee State University was started similarly when, at the June 17, 1984, Commencement of Shawnee State Community College, then Governor James A. Rhodes, Commencement speaker, suggested that what Portsmouth and South Central Ohio needed to rejuvenate itself from its economic doldrums was to transform the community college into a four-year university. He turned to Ohio House of Representatives Speaker Vernal G. Riffe, Jr., and challenged him to do whatever needed to be done to transform the community college into Ohio's thirteenth state university.

At great political risk, Speaker Riffe, for the only time in his long and distinguished leadership as Speaker of the House, was the prime sponsor of a Bill, Amended House Bill No. 739. His dream of providing educational opportunity to people of his legislative district came true when Shawnee State was established as a four-year university on July 2, 1986.

That was not the first time that Mr. Riffe promoted higher education in Southern Ohio and, indeed, the state. In fact, he had been a vocal supporter of education at all levels during his entire tenure as a legislator and is most worthy of being known as the "Education Speaker."

From his first years in the House as a member of the Education Committee, Speaker Riffe had an important role in the education of all segments of the population. And, as far back as 1963, Speaker Riffe had a strong influence on the development of higher education in Southern Ohio, for it was then that the Legislature appropriated \$200,000 for planning the growth of Ohio University, Portsmouth Branch. His support of that institution remained strong and resulted in \$2,000,000 for the construction of Massie Hall, the original building around which Shawnee State was built. The Speaker also shared his expertise to ensure passage of the bond issue that created the Scioto County Joint Vocational School. He then led the legislative support of both the vocational high school and the technical college, which was combined with the OU-Portsmouth Branch to become Shawnee State Community College.

Thus, there is little doubt that, without the guidance, energy, enthusiasm and shepherding of Vernal G. Riffe, Jr., Shawnee State University would not exist to serve the people of Southern Ohio. Further, it is a surety that the institution has grown continually stronger because of his constant care and concern.

## 2.0 Name of Founders' Medal

In recognition of the important role played by Speaker Vern Riffe of the Ohio House of Representatives, the medal shall be known as the "Vernal G. Riffe Jr. Founders' Medal," and shall carry the likeness of the person so honored.

## 3.0 Award Criteria

The Vernal G. Riffe Jr. Founders' Medal shall be awarded periodically by action of the SSU Board of Trustees to individuals who provide **extraordinary service** to Shawnee State University. Beyond this central criterion, persons so honored shall possess the following attributes as exhibited by Vernal G. Riffe, Jr., during his illustrious 36-year career in the Ohio House of Representatives, including 20 years as Speaker:

- 3.1 Sustained dedication to providing educational opportunity to Southern Ohians;
- 3.2 Commitment to public service through personal efforts; and
- 3.3 Substantial investment of time, talent or money that assists Shawnee State University in meeting its mission.

## 4.0 Award Process

Nominations must address the Award Criteria and made in writing to the President of the University by members or friends of the Shawnee State University community. Nominations will be acted upon by the University Senate as recommended by its Executive Board. The President will transmit the University Senate recommendation along with his recommendation to the Board of Trustees through its Executive Committee.

The Board of Trustees reserves the right to nominate candidates directly to the Board through its Executive Committee.

## 5.0 Confidentiality

All nominations will be held in the strictest of confidence and especially from the nominee until action by the Board of Trustees.

## 6.0 Presentation of the Award

Awards shall be presented at an appropriate public event as determined by the President and/or the Shawnee State University Board of Trustees.

## 7.0 Appointment as Founder Emeritus

In recognition of the establishment of this award, Vernal G. Riffe, Jr., is hereby appointed to serve Shawnee State University as Founder Emeritus with all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities of a trustee emeritus. In addition, he shall:

- 7.1 Serve as a consultant to the President and Board of Trustees;
- 7.2 Be invited to participate in the University's ceremonial functions;
- 7.3 Be provided an office; and
- 7.4 Be invited to serve as instructor or guest lecturer in classes and at public events.