

THOMAS FRANKLIN WILLIAMS

As increasing numbers of Americans at the end of the twentieth-century push back the limits of life expectancy, T. Franklin Williams has made it a large part of his life's work both to understand the process of human aging and to prolong and enhance its quality.

After his graduation from this institution with a Bachelor of Science degree in 1942, followed by an M.A. from Columbia and an M.D. from Harvard Medical School, he returned to the University of North Carolina as a member of the Department of Medicine, rising from Instructor to Professor between 1956 and 1968. Becoming a leader among the faculty, he led the way through his teaching and research to the wider goal of serving the health needs of the state and nation. With the passage of the Medicare and Medicaid programs in 1965, he responded to an invitation by the federal government to organize an interdisciplinary program of services for older Americans previously uninsured. The plan he devised for this institution was one of eight that were initially approved and funded, leading to the establishment of what is today called the Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research.

Leaving his alma mater in 1968, he became Professor of Medicine at the University of Rochester, a position that he still occupies. Under his leadership as Medical Director of the Monroe Community Hospital in Rochester, that institution is today an internationally respected center for innovations in geriatric medicine.

As Franklin Williams's record of service became widely acknowledged, he was chosen in 1983 to become the Director of the National Institute on Aging at the National Institutes of Health and, concurrently, Assistant Surgeon General. He remained in these positions until 1991.

An acknowledged leader for civil rights during his years in North Carolina and noted by his colleagues for his modesty and compassion, T. Franklin Williams has been a pioneer in a program of medicine that has touched countless lives. For his generous dedication to that calling, we salute him on this occasion by conferring upon him this honorary degree of Doctor of Science.