

**William Forrest Winter**  
**Doctor of Laws**

William F. Winter, 58<sup>th</sup> governor of Mississippi, has devoted his public life to improving public education, economic advancement, and racial reconciliation in the South and throughout the nation. Winter was elected to the Mississippi legislature while still in law school. He subsequently served as state treasurer, lieutenant governor, and governor (1980-84). Mississippi's 1982 Education Reform Act, passed at Governor Winter's urging, has been called the most significant educational legislation in Mississippi since the foundation of its public school system in 1870. Public kindergartens were a cornerstone of that law. It attracted national attention for its progressive foresight and became a model for other Southern states, including North Carolina.

During his gubernatorial term, Winter established himself as a regional and national leader by serving as chairman of the Southern Growth Policies Board, state co-chairman of the Appalachian Regional Commission, and chairman of the Southern Regional Education Board. After leaving the governor's office, Winter carved out an extraordinary role as a progressive "conscience of the South," traveling widely in the region to inspire leaders, to speak to the persistent need for closing racial and economic gaps, and to continue making the case for educational progress.

In the mid-1980s, Governor Winter chaired two major panels that documented Southern economic trends and strongly influenced the region's dialogue and decision-making. As chairman of the Southern Growth Policies Board, he oversaw the highly influential report "Halfway Home and a Long Way to Go." For the first time, this report connected economic development to education, technology, human resource development, leadership development, government reform, and small business creation. As chairman of MDC, Inc., (a non-profit group based in Chapel Hill whose mission is to advance the South through strategies that expand opportunity, reduce poverty, and build inclusive communities) he fostered issuance of "Shadows in the Sunbelt," a groundbreaking report that focused attention on the continuing need to address the underdevelopment of the South's rural areas.

For the past decade, Governor Winter has increasingly devoted his energies to the issues of racial reconciliation in the South and nation. He served on President Clinton's Race Initiative Board. One outcome of that service was creation of the William F. Winter Institute for Racial Reconciliation at the University of Mississippi, which he currently chairs. He has also provided critical advice and support in the development of Carolina's program in Southern Politics, Media, and Public Life.

William F. Winter's career spans an especially formative time in his native state and region. His life exemplifies the high art of public leadership inspired by personal integrity and deep human concern for his fellow citizens. Indeed, he has been called the "First Citizen of the South."