

Widener Names Franklin Institute Chief Astronomer to Board of Trustees

Derrick H. Pitts, chief astronomer for the Franklin Institute Science Museum and director of the Fels Planetarium, has been elected to the university's board of trustees. The Philadelphia region's foremost astronomy authority, Pitts is the first African-American chief astronomer at the Institute. In 2004, *Science Spectrum* magazine named Pitts "one of the 50 most important blacks in research science."

"Derrick Pitts has changed the way that people in the Philadelphia region look at the night sky," said Widener University President James T. Harris III. "He has also changed the way that thousands of youth in the region look at science. His passion for science and teaching has inspired countless young minds, and we welcome his passion and drive to the Widener University board of trustees."

"Widener has become a premiere university in the region because of its bold civic engagement initiatives and innovative efforts to engage youth in science, mathematics, technology, and engineering," Pitts said. "I look forward to working with President Harris and the Widener board of trustees to advance these strengths and further advance the university's reputation as a national leader among metropolitan universities."

A resident of Philadelphia, Pitts joined the Franklin Institute in 1978 as a museum educator and rose to the rank of chief astronomer and planetarium director in 1990. He has used the popular media to spread his fascination with the cosmos to the Philadelphia region and beyond.

Locally, Pitts created and hosts two award-winning radio programs on WHY 91 FM. *SkyTalk*, a discussion of timely space and atmospheric topics airing on Mondays, and *SkyTour*, a quarterly planetarium show. In addition, he appears twice a month on WXPN's Kids Corner, a children's radio program, and contributes astronomy columns to the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Courier-Post* of southern New Jersey.

Nationally, Pitts can be seen regularly on CNN, MSNBC, The History Channel, *CBS News*, *The Today Show*, and *Good Morning America*. In January, MSNBC's Keith Olbermann described him as "one of our favorite guides through the final frontier." He also serves as a scientific consultant to Lockheed Martin and NASA among others.

For his accomplishments in the fields of astronomy and education, Pitts was awarded the Mayor's Liberty Bell Award in 1990, and the George Washington Carver Award in 1995. In 2004, he was inducted into the Germantown Historical Society Hall of Fame.

Pitts and his wife, Linda Carroll-Pitts, are also active leaders of the Greater Philadelphia Chapter of the Tuskegee Airmen Inc.



Derrick H. Pitts recently became the newest member of the Widener University board of trustees.

Spreading Holiday Cheer Across the Atlantic



Members of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute on Widener's Exton Campus recently collected 9 boxes of goods to ship to our soldiers in Iraq. The group sent the gifts to three Widener ROTC alumni currently serving overseas as Army nurses. The packages will arrive shortly to provide the nurses with warm wishes from home during this holiday season.

