

# Dr. Valeria Fleming's 50th Year Celebration

by Brensha Williams



photo by Francine Dunbar

"Believing Before Seeing the Light at the End of the Tunnel," was the monumental theme throughout the day on Friday, April 9th. Fayetteville State University and the University of North Carolina system proudly recognized Dr. Valeria Fleming for 50 years of educational excellence and service. As one of the most influential leaders in higher education, Dr. Fleming was the first female Provost in The University of North Carolina System. Additionally, the biology professor was one of the first participants and first to complete the UNC Board of Governor's Faculty Doctoral Study Assignment Program. Dr. Fleming said she felt "Exhilaratingly Special" during the celebration.

Hosted by the Department of Natural Sciences, this historic

day began with a professional round-up, which showcased a panel of 14 former FSU students, who are currently working in professional fields such as researchers, physicians, dentists, and optometrists. Current students were given the opportunity to discuss and ask questions about the experiences of the alumni. Immediately following the professional round-up, a science colloquium in honor of Dr. Fleming took place in Seabrook Auditorium. "Biology/ Biotechnology: Linking the Past to the Future of our Students," was the theme of the program. The panel of experts included Dr. Antonio Baines, Dr. Goldie Byrd, Dr. Melvin Echols, and Dr. Leslie Lerea. The panel answered various questions led by moderator, Dr. Joseph Johnson. The discussion consisted of how the

field of biology and biotechnology research has evolved and its influence on students and the society. "The technology of the last two decades has significantly increased how we see the world around us. It allows us to focus on the minute aspects of our complicated world, and to realize that what we know only touches the surface. Technology has significantly increased the communication between students and faculty regarding a variety of opportunities and information-in both face to face and in electronic venues," said Fleming.

During the science colloquium, one of the panel experts, Dr. Baines, remembered Dr. Fleming as his teaching mentor. Baines, giving honor to Dr. Fleming, spoke of how she influenced his decision to go into teaching.

"She was an awesome mentor," Baines said. Dr. Goldie Byrd, giving praise to Dr. Fleming's work and service said, "I want to be just like you when I grow up!" The colloquium ended with an award presentation to Dr. Fleming from the science colloquium committee.

Hosted by FSU, and friends and family of Dr. Fleming, a dinner banquet was held later that evening to celebrate the golden milestone of Dr. Fleming's commitment to education. Fleming was presented with a variety of prestigious awards including the Cumberland County Proclamation Award, City of Fayetteville Proclamation Award, Rowan County Proclamation Award, The Fayetteville State University Service Award, The Chancellor's Medallion, The Richard Caswell Award, and the

Order of the Long Leaf Pine Award, the highest award a North Carolinian can receive.

"The great delight that I got from the day and the many expressions

and without knowing it, the institution has become an extension of my family. It has been a pleasure and an honor to work directly or indirectly with so many students and to look with pride through

"The great delight that I got from the day and the many expressions of love and appreciation were overwhelming . . ."

of love and appreciation were overwhelming," Fleming said. "I am grateful to Chancellor Anderson and the faculty, staff, and students for planning and executing such a magnificent day. My fifty years at FSU have passed swiftly

the years at our FSU alumni and students. With pride, I recognize a great potential that FSU and the students who graduate from it now have."