

Teresa Womble

- ▼ Miami-Dade Community College, North ▼ 3.95 GPA
- ▼ Sophomore in Funeral Science & Business Administration

Although she now says being a leader on campus “fits me as comfortably as a glove,” Teresa Womble never imagined the impact she could have as a nontraditional student. A 46-year-old mother of three and grandmother of nine, Womble says although she works alongside much younger students, she approaches leading them from a peer perspective.

Florida Leader magazine, First Union National Bank of Florida, Publix Super Markets, and a national panel of judges are proud to recognize Teresa Womble, a sophomore in funeral science and business administration at Miami-Dade Community College, as the 1998 Florida College Student of the Year.

Because Womble herself struggled as a 15-year-old single mother, she relates easily to many fellow students. “A lot of them come from situations where they didn’t get hugs or praises as a child,” she says. “Sometimes I sense they just need someone to put an arm around them and say ‘Don’t give up. It’s hard today — but it will get better tomorrow.’”

One of the qualities Womble models for her younger peers is “stick-to-it-iveness.” “I try to stay focused on my goal of getting an education. In my mind, nothing’s going to stop me.” In leading a group, Womble takes a similar approach. “If people are on the same track, the results will take care of themselves.”

Although Womble believes in delegation, she’s not afraid to walk out front. “I lead by example. You can’t just tell someone what they need to do — you should say, ‘Let’s get involved and do it together.’” While serving as Phi Theta Kappa chapter president in fall 1997, Womble organized a debate on ebonics, coordinated a memorial service to honor women including Mother Teresa and Princess Diana, and planned a “Women’s Health Issues for the 90’s” forum.

Womble gives generously of her time despite a demanding academic schedule. She offers her expertise as a member of Miami-Dade’s Council on Black American Affairs, comprised of 25 faculty and students. In the

community, she packages groceries for the Food for Life Network foodbank for needy individuals diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. Womble also has participated in an Adopt-A-Grandparent program at a local retirement center as well as the “Kids Reading Hour” at Poinciana Park Elementary School.

PTK advisor Marvin Langsam calls Womble “the best we’ve had come through here. She has



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a knack for leadership — she’s very good at motivating without giving orders,” he says. “When her followers complete a task, they say, ‘We did it ourselves,’ but they are motivated by her.” Womble currently is public relations chair for the Mu Epsilon chapter.

According to MDCC Honors Program Director E. Carter Burrus, Jr., “From the moment Teresa came in, her presence was one of leadership. She doesn’t push herself to the forefront, but she gets her goal or mission accomplished.”

In addition to her honors program

involvement, Womble serves on the school’s Women’s History Month, Black History Month, and Programming and Legislative Action committees. In her role as president of MDCC’s Student Organizational Council, Womble unifies representatives of all campus groups and promotes campus involvement.

Even though Womble doesn’t put herself in the spotlight, her contributions don’t go unnoticed. She was recognized as a member of the 1997 *USA Today* All-Florida Academic Team and was one of 25 PTK members nationally to receive the George O. Bierkoe Distinguished Member Award in April 1997.

Womble’s dedication to any project at hand is evident. “So many times, I see people who are not committed,” says Womble, who is completing two associate degrees at the same time. “They stop attending meetings and the group falls apart.” Although conflict and failure are not the most pleasant parts of leading, Womble faces them head-on. “I like harmony, but as a leader, it’s up to me to make others realize it’s OK to disagree,” she says.

Even as she heads up a group or task, Womble is good at setting aside her personal opinion. “You can’t go in with your own agenda — you need to include everyone in your group to give them a voice. It has helped me to get feedback, and plus you get some downright good creative ideas.”

While integrating input from others, Womble says effective leaders also keep the big picture in mind. “A good leader has to be a visionary and be able to see the scope not just for today, but in the future — that helps a group grow and fulfill its mission.”

To support herself, Womble works as an insurance agent and as a funeral consultant. Womble also is active in the political arena, coordinating and serving as co-moderator for three Political Public Forums prior to local elections in November 1997.

As Womble looks forward to getting her associate degrees and moving on to a four-year institution, she plans to continue preaching the value of achievement in and out of the classroom. “It’s amazing how things have worked out so much better for me because I’m involved and make it a point to be a part of what’s going on.”

Womble attributes her success not so much to her extraordinary talent, but to dedication and the strength she derives from her relationship with God. “My mother was a missionary, and I never thought of myself as being one, but I am,” Womble says. “It’s what God has ordained us to do — to help each other. I have a caring, nurturing spirit. The more I give, the more I receive.”