

# Important Decision? College President says, “Pray About It!!”

September 27, 2021

For my first job as a teacher, I returned to Lake-Sumter, where I was the first alumni to return to the teaching faculty. This happened at the time of the war in Viet Nam, and a very active draft policy was in force for all healthy males. Throughout my education years, I had a student deferment military classification. For the first two years of my teaching career, I was likewise deferred from military service as a teacher, due to teacher shortages. Suddenly, my teacher deferment from military service was withdrawn, and I faced a decision of being drafted for 2 years and a likely tour in Viet Nam, or of joining the National Guard with 6 months of basic training and 6 years of mostly local duties.

My department chairman, who was himself a retired colonel from the US Military Academy, recommended that I go ahead and be drafted. For a second opinion, I went to Dr. Paul P. Williams, President of Lake-Sumter Junior College. I told Dr. Williams that I wanted to do what was best for the College. Dr. Williams suggested that I do what was best for ME. He told me that if he and I both disappeared from the face of the earth, the College would go on very well without us!! Then he gave me the best advice of my life: **“Pray about it!!”** I was impressed! This was NOT a preacher!! This was a college president telling me to “pray about it.” I took Dr. Williams advice! It seems that I had fallen in love with a lovely young maiden named Martha, and I just could not bear to leave her for 2 years. My department chairman was VERY unhappy with my decision, so my teaching career at Lake-Sumter was over after 2 ½ years. Dr. Paul Williams was immediately placed on my list of personal heroes for my life!

When I returned from basic training, a teaching position was available at Seminole Junior College, soon to become Seminole Community College, and now Seminole State College of Florida. I applied for the position and was hired in 1971, where I stayed for 36 years until my retirement in 2007. Meanwhile I did adjunct teaching for Nova University, Rollins College, and the University of Central Florida. Without leaving Seminole, I was able to complete the requirements for a doctoral degree in education in 1987 at the University of Florida.

[Return to homepage](#)

**Dr. Robert J. Rapalje, Retired**

**Seminole State College of Florida**

**Altamonte Springs Campus**

**Email: [rapaljer@mathinlivingcolor.com](mailto:rapaljer@mathinlivingcolor.com)**