

IRMA McCLAURIN '76 MFA, '89 MA, '93 PhD

2016 Distinguished Alumni Award Recipient

Irma McClaurin '76 MFA, '89 MA, '93 PhD is the chief diversity officer for Teach For America, a nonprofit organization working to strengthen the movement for educational equity and excellence. She is also an activist anthropologist, writer, poet and educator. Passion and a deep commitment to social justice inform her actions as she provides insight and leadership on issues of inequality, diversity and inclusiveness.

Growing up in Chicago, McClaurin experienced social injustice first-hand. She is a first-generation college graduate having earned a bachelor's degree in American studies from Grinnell College before attending UMass Amherst to earn a master of fine arts degree in English and both a master's and doctorate degree in anthropology.

Prior to joining Teach For America, McClaurin was a senior faculty member at the Federal Executive Institute, where she provided leadership education to senior federal executives. She has held the positions of president of Shaw University, founding executive director of the University of Minnesota's first Urban Research and Outreach-Engagement Center, deputy provost at Fisk University, and the Mott Distinguished Chair of Women's Studies at Bennett College for Women where she founded the Africana Women's Studies program.

She was awarded tenure twice in anthropology by the Universities of Florida and Minnesota. She was also assistant dean for the UMass Amherst College of Arts and Sciences Information Advising Center and adjunct faculty in Women's Studies where she established the Domestic Exchange Office and designed the junior writing course for Women's Studies among other accomplishments.

In addition, McClaurin served as a program officer at the Ford Foundation, managing an annual portfolio of \$10M that supported Black Studies, Women's Studies and the Ford Foundation Diversity Fellowship.

An award-winning writer, McClaurin, who is the culture and education editor for *Insight News*, earned first place for the 2015 Emory O. Jackson National Column Writing Award from the Black Press given by the National Newspaper Publishing Association. She is the editor of *Black Feminist Anthropology: Theory, Politics, Praxis and Poetics*, named an Outstanding Academic Title by *Choice* magazine in 2003.

Her book, *Women of Belize: Gender and Change in Central America*, was the second book ever published on women in that country and celebrates 20 years in print this year. McClaurin is an accomplished poet whose poems have appeared in over 16 magazines and anthologies, and are translated into Spanish and Swedish. She is establishing a legacy in collaboration with the UMass Amherst W.E.B. Du Bois Library entitled the Irma McClaurin Black Feminist Archive.

