

Gwen Norrell, born on November 12, 1919 in Eudora, Arkansas, received a B.S. in history from Peabody College for Teachers, taught for two years in Arkansas, went to Columbia for her master's in Counseling, and received a Doctor of Education from Colorado. Norrell began working at Michigan State University in 1945 in the area of vocational guidance. She tested veterans on career choices and traveled throughout Michigan recruiting students to attend MSU. Norrell was instrumental in creating the present-day Admissions Office. She was responsible for testing student applicants for the Alumni Distinguished Scholarship. She also began a program for disadvantaged students who were poor. She was the first woman to chair the University Steering Committee and Academic Senate, the first woman to be a faculty athletic representative to the Big 10, and the first woman president of the NCAA. In this position she was a great advocate for MSU athletics and was responsible for integrating women into athletics, which was precursor to Title IX. She also set up the academic portion of the research unit in the NCAA. Norrell retired from MSU in 1988 and died on June 15, 2004.