

1984 Engineer of Distinction



Wallace S. Prescott

B.S. General Engineering, TPI, 1946
M.S. Civil Engineering, University of Tennessee, 1952
Ph.D. Civil Engineering, University of Illinois, 1962

Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Emeritus
Professor Emeritus of Civil Engineering
Tennessee Technological University

Vice President for Financial Services
Citizens Bank
Cookeville, Tennessee

Citation

Wallace S. Prescott began his academic career in September 1943 after having served for three years as a topographical draftsman for the maps and surveys division of the Tennessee Valley Authority in Chattanooga. He received a degree in general engineering from Tech in 1946 and later, while a Tech faculty member, completed the requirements for a B.S. in civil engineering.

Dr. Prescott left Tech upon completing his engineering course work to take a job as a structural engineer with the Nashville Bridge Company. It was less than a year later, however, that Tech's first engineering dean, J.M. Henderson, asked him to return as a faculty member. Dr. Prescott accepted and was a Tech classroom teacher for the next 16 years.

During those years he earned a master's degree in civil engineering from the University of Tennessee and attained the rank of professor. He continued to work at engineering in the summers, particularly with the Tennessee Highway Department as a bridge designer.

In 1959, Dr. Prescott was one of four engineers chosen from among thousands of competitors from across the country to receive a National Science Foundation fellowship to work for a Ph.D. in civil engineering. He received that degree from the University of Illinois in 1962 after a two-year leave of absence from Tech.

It was also in 1962 that President Everett Derryberry called on Dr. Prescott to become Tech's chief academic officer as dean of the faculty. That was three years before Tennessee Polytechnic Institute became Tennessee Technological University, and Dr. Prescott played a major role in developing the curriculum and faculty in preparation for university status.

In addition to having primary responsibility for the total academic program of the University for 21 years, Dr. Prescott was heavily involved in long-range planning and in annual budget planning for the entire University, not just for the academic programs. He was a member of the Tennessee Higher Education Commission's Funding Formula Review Committee, has frequently been a member of evaluation teams for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and has served on the advisory committee of the Tennessee Industrial Research Advisory Service.

During his tenure as dean of the faculty, Dr. Prescott appointed all but one of Tech's academic deans, all but two of the University's departmental chairmen, and 95 percent of the 326 faculty members. He certified the awarding of more than 20,000 degrees, more than 80 percent of the total in Tech history. At the time of his retirement, his full-time service to the University stretched back further than that of any other member of the faculty and staff—back to 1946.

Dr. Prescott has always been among the most active individuals in the life of the community. He has served for the past eight years on the board of directors of Cookeville General Hospital, is a member of the board of directors of Citizens Bank, is a deacon and Sunday School teacher at First Baptist Church in Cookeville, and is a member and past president of the Cookeville Rotary Club. He was formerly assistant Scoutmaster and past advisor to senior Scouts in Cookeville and active in other Scouting activities. He has been president and vice president of the Cookeville-Putnam County Chamber of Commerce and has often been engaged in efforts to attract new industry to the Upper Cumberland region.

Dr. Prescott received the Distinguished Alumnus Award of Tennessee Tech in 1977, the Outstanding Civilian Service Award of the United States Army in 1983, and the Founders' Award of West Georgia College in 1983. The building which houses the chemical engineering, civil engineering, and industrial engineering departments was named Prescott Hall in his honor in 1971. He is a registered professional engineer in Tennessee.

After 21 years as Tennessee Tech's chief academic officer, after 16 years as a faculty member, and 40 years after he first arrived at the institution as a student, Dr. Prescott retired from the University only to begin a second career—as Vice President of Financial Services at Citizens Bank. In that role, he presides over the region's unique program of investment services—called Citizens Exchange.



Dr. Prescott receives his citation from TTU President Emeritus Everett Derryberry