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### Roy P. Peterson

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#### Recommended Citation

Dyer, Anna Presley, "Roy P. Peterson" (2021). *Roy P. Peterson Collection*. 1.  
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## **Dr. Roy Philip Peterson**

Interim President of Tennessee State University from 1985-1986, Dr. Roy Philip Peterson was born in Alexandria, Louisiana in 1934. Education became a lifelong passion for Dr. Peterson, which led to many endeavors across the United States. In 1957, he graduated cum laude from South University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Dr. Peterson then moved west to earn his master's degree in reproductive biology from the University of Oregon in 1961. Next, he was accepted to the Ph.D. program specializing in endocrinology at the University of Iowa.

Upon his doctoral completion in 1967, Dr. Peterson served as an academic officer for the Illinois Oversight Board of Higher Education. In 1980, he accepted the Deputy Executive Director for Academic Affairs position at the Kentucky Council on Higher Education, now known as the Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education. Following his interim presidency at Tennessee State University in Nashville, he returned to the Kentucky Council on Higher Education in 1987 as the Executive Assistant Director for Educational Attainment.

During his time at the Kentucky Council on Higher Education, Dr. Peterson created many programs and committees that still have a lasting influence today, including the Governor's Minority Student College Preparation Program, the Southern Regional Education Board's Compact for Faculty Diversity, and the Committee on Equal Opportunities. He also chaired the YMCA Black Achievers Steering Committee and Scholarship Committee. Dr. Peterson's educational leadership served at a national level as well. In addition to serving on the National Council of Higher Education board, he would serve on the Education Commission of the States, the National Commission on Higher Education Issues, and the Minority Doctoral Scholars Program.

Dr. Peterson would eventually bring his admirable leadership attributes to the Governor's Task Force for the Arts under the Kentucky Governor Wallace Wilkinson administration. In 1995, Governor Paul E. Patton would appoint Dr. Peterson as Secretary of the Kentucky Cabinet for Education, Arts, and Humanities, a position he would serve until his death from lung cancer in 1998.

Due to such dedication, Dr. Peterson has earned notable honors and awards, many of which he shares with his wife, Juanita Betz Peterson. These achievements include The Adult Achiever of the YMCA Black Achievers Program (1989), The Leader in Education and the Arts by The Lane Report (1996), The Hellenic Ideals Award (1998), The YMCA Black Achievers Community Achiever Award (1999), and The Lauren W. Weinberg Humanitarian Award sponsored by the National Conference of Community and Justice (1999). Dr. Peterson was posthumously presented the Governor's Award in the Arts known as The Milner Award in 2000. The Milner Award remains the most prestigious tribute to outstanding art contributions in the state of Kentucky.

Today, Dr. Peterson's legacy continues through the Dr. Roy P. and Juanita Betz Peterson Arts and Education Fund, a nonprofit foundation dedicated to serving students from Central Kentucky colleges and universities with the dream pursuit of vocal performance and competition.



#### Further Reading

Arts council announces Governor's Awards in the arts 2000. (January/February 2001). *The Blue Moon*, 7(1). [http://www.e-archives.ky.gov/pubs/arts\\_council/janfeb01.pdf](http://www.e-archives.ky.gov/pubs/arts_council/janfeb01.pdf)

The Dr. Roy P. and Juanita Betz Peterson Arts and Education Fund, Inc. (n.d.). *Dr. Roy P. Peterson*. <http://www.petersonartsfund.org/dr-roy-p-peterson.html>

Education Cabinet chief Roy Peterson dies of lung cancer. (1998, November 29). *The Courier-Journal*, B3. Retrieved from Newspapers.com.

Former TSU leader dies at 64 of lung cancer. (1998, November 29). *The Tennessean*, 3B.  
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<https://nkaa.uky.edu/nkaa/items/show/1542>