

R. Seth Williams (BA Lib 1989)



In 1988, Black Caucus President Rufus “Seth” Williams was elected president of the Undergraduate Student Government (USG), becoming the third African American to be elected to head the Penn State student government. Williams would push for an open university budget, an elected student representative on the board of trustees, student control of the student activities fund, the creation of a vice provost for underrepresented groups, and an increase in the recruitment of African American students, faculty and staff.

While only part of his platform would be realized, Williams did leave his mark. A second-generation Penn State student activist, Williams marched to Harrisburg to oppose apartheid, challenged Penn State for inappropriately disposing of low-level radioactive waste and was twice arrested for demanding racial equality on campus. The Telecommunications Building arrest (he was part of a group that took over the building for 15 hours in April 1988) landed him on national television with Dan Rather of CBS News. During his terms as both Black Caucus and USG President Williams received multi death threats.

After graduating, Williams attended Georgetown University Law Center and went on to serve 10 years as a Philadelphia assistant district attorney. Following an unsuccessful run for Philadelphia district attorney, and a two-year stint in private practice, Williams was appointed Philadelphia inspector general in 2005. In January 2008 Williams joined Stradley Ronon Stevens & Young, LLP in its litigation practice group.

Source: Voices of Central Pennsylvania February 2, 2008 - www.voicesweb.org