**Women History Month: COL Michelle M. Williams**

##### “Women Who Have Made Great Achievements”



Introduction: The Army is one of the most diverse organizations in the United States. Every month the Army celebrates the diversity in its ranks. March is no exception as the service pays tribute to the women who, through their determination and contributions, have shaped America’s history and whose efforts continue to pave the way forward and contributing on Women’s History Month.

COL Michelle M. Williams, currently serving as a Commandant, U.S. Army Finance & Comptroller School and is the first female serving in the position.

1. Tell us a little bit about yourself:

I am COL Michelle Williams, originally from St. Louis, Missouri, and have been in the US Army Finance Corps just under 25 years. My commissioning source was ROTC and I was awarded the Distinguished Military Graduate. I am currently serving as the first female Commandant, U.S. Army Finance & Comptroller School, and Chief of the Finance Corps. I also served as the first female, Congressional Budget Liaison Chief, where my staff was the interlocutors between the HQDA Staff and Congressional Appropriators. To sum up my 25 years of experience, I consistently strive to employ avant-garde approaches to break through difficult barriers, build bridges, and solve multi-faceted complex problems.

1. Why is important that we celebrate Women’s History Month or what does it mean to you?

We must continue to celebrate Women’s History Month because authentic leadership should always be celebrated at every opportunity, and it is our responsibility to instill hope and inspire the next generation of women. It is incumbent upon us to celebrate so that our history books reflect an accurate legacy of service, commitment, sacrifice, and honor. We must ensure our younger generations understand that history is also waiting for their names.

1. Who are some Women that have inspired you or had an impact on your life and why?

There are too many women to name. At the end of the day, we are all trailblazers at heart, and we must forge ahead to be the trailblazers for our younger generation.

1. What were some challenges that you or others you may know faced during the time in the military and how has the military evolved since then?

We all have challenges, more importantly it is the way you meet those challenges and overcome them throughout your life. Perspective is the key and will set the course for what happens in your future. To quote a talented and amazing woman who made history outside of the Armed Forces, Aretha Franklin, “It’s the rough side of the mountain that’s the easier to climb; the smooth side doesn't have anything for you to hang on to.” Keep this quote handy when working through challenges throughout your life.

1. What made you join the Army?

Believe it or not, I initially joined the U.S. Army to find a way to pay for my college education, as we did not have the benefit of debt forgiveness. I received a 4-year ROTC scholarship and graduated with a Bachelor of Science from Florida Institute of Technology in Business Administration in 1999. Then I was fortunate to have another opportunity to obtain an U.S. Army financed graduate degree from Georgetown University in Public Policy Administration. Later, I received another Master's in Strategic Studies from the Army War College.

1. How do diverse teams improve our squads?

Diverse teams enrich our squads by fostering creativity, improving decision-making, enhancing adaptability, and driving innovation and engagement. Embracing diversity is not only the right thing to do but also essential for building strong and successful teams in today's dynamic and interconnected world. Diverse teams offer numerous benefits to our squads - I will highlight two:

1) Broader Perspectives - diverse teams bring together individuals with unique backgrounds, experiences, and viewpoints. This diversity of perspectives encourages innovative thinking and problem-solving approaches that may have yet to be considered.

2) Improved decision-making - diverse teams are better equipped to analyze complex problems from multiple angles and make more informed decisions. By considering diverse viewpoints, teams can identify potential blind spots and develop more comprehensive strategies.