Edward Tolliver embraces lifelong learning and has earned four college degrees, including a doctorate. One stop in his journey was Tallahassee Community College.

Tolliver grew up in Apalachicola, where he was influenced by neighbors that included former Florida A & M University presidents Benjamin Perry and Fredrick Humphries.

“I used to go fishing with the late Jake Gaither, and he would talk to me about where I was going to go to college,” said Tolliver, whose parents, both college graduates, also instilled in him the importance of education.

After graduating from Apalachicola High School in 1976, Tolliver headed to FAMU. However, he left college after a couple of years to support his young family. Once he was ready to get back to school, Tolliver enrolled in TCC.

“I saw TCC as a bridge to get back into the academic arena,” said Tolliver. “TCC offered the convenience of going to school at night. If you can work and go to school, there is no telling what you are able to achieve.”

Tolliver graduated from TCC in 1986 with his younger sister, Joan, who transferred to Florida State University. Tolliver returned to FAMU and earned a bachelor’s degree in office administration. During the decades that followed, he earned two additional degrees from FAMU—a master’s in 1998 and a doctorate in educational leadership and human services in 2007. “I always took advantage of employee tuition reimbursement because it was like getting a raise,” said Tolliver.

In the meanwhile, Tolliver was building a reputation as a savvy purchasing agent with organizations that included hospitals, FAMU and the Florida Department of Management Services, where he served as bureau chief of state purchasing. He and his staff administered state contracts valued at approximately $2.5 billion annually. He also helped author such initiatives as One Florida Equity in Contracting. In 2015, Tolliver joined the staff of Lively Technical Center, where he teaches business courses and oversees campus safety, cafeteria operations and other areas.

Tolliver’s son Michael played basketball for TCC in the mid-1990s, and Tolliver himself remains connected to his alma mater by serving on the executive council of the Alumni and Friends Association.

“TCC was a conduit for a lot of us,” said Tolliver. “TCC has ‘community’ in its name, and I think they live out that title every day.”