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Illinois Wesleyan Mourns the Loss of Wendell Hess

April 4, 2014

BLOOMINGTON, IL. —The Illinois Wesleyan University community lost one of its most respected and appreciated academic leaders when Emeritus Professor Wendell Hess, the University's first provost, passed away Thursday, April 3.

A memorial service is scheduled at 2 p.m. Saturday, April 12 at Wesley United Methodist Church, 502 E. Front St., Bloomington, with a reception immediately following.

In a message to the campus community, President Richard F. Wilson noted, "Wendell's commitment to the University was enduring, and we are saddened by his sudden passing." He asked the Wesleyan community to join him in extending sympathy to Loretta Hess, the Hess children — David and Cara — and to the entire Hess family.

Commenting on Hess's career Wilson noted, "Wendell made significant contributions as a teacher, advisor, and committee member. He also served in several key leadership positions." Those positions included chemistry department chair, director of science programs, associate dean (twice) and dean of the University. In 1987, Hess was named Illinois Wesleyan's first provost and served as acting president the following year while a search was conducted for a successor to President Wayne Anderson.

Hess joined the IWU faculty in 1963 as an assistant chemistry professor after receiving his doctorate in chemistry from the University of Kansas. In 1969 he was named the Century Club Honoree, the University's highest honor for teaching excellence. Over the course of his career, Hess served on numerous faculty and University committees and held various leadership positions.

Upon being named provost, Hess stated his goal was to maintain an environment in which "the greatest teaching can occur." Among his initiatives was to convert Buck Library into an appropriate space for emerging computing technologies — efforts for which the University received national accolades. During the 1980s, Hess was appointed by President Robert S. Eckley to lead a University task force charged with developing new academic programs such as International Studies, fostering the faculty's professional growth and enhancing pre-professional opportunities for students.

When Wendell and Loretta Hess made a gift establishing an Endowed Professorship in 2012, President Wilson expressed a deep admiration for Hess "as one of our longest serving and most loyal faculty members and administrators."

"This professorship is yet another example of his commitment to the University and the value he placed on great teaching," said Wilson. Chemistry Professor Ram Mohan was formally invested as the Wendell and Loretta Hess Professor of Chemistry this fall during the annual President's Convocation.

An active member of the Bloomington-Normal community over many years, Hess served on the board of Wesley United Methodist Church, was president of the Board of Trustees of The Baby Fold and was named "Citizen of the Year" in 2011 by



Wendell Hess, right, posed with the newly invested Wendell and Loretta Hess Professor of Chemistry Ram Mohan after the Sept. 4, 2013 President's Convocation.

the Town of Normal.

Among his many professional honors and distinctions were election to Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society and Phi Lambda Upsilon – The National Chemistry Honor Society. Prior to earning his doctorate, he worked as a chemist with Phillips Petroleum in Texas and as a nuclear reactor engineer at Idaho's National Reactor Testing Station.

Alumni, colleagues and friends are invited to [share tributes on Facebook](#).

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