



IN MEMORIAM

Peter A. Rock
Professor of Chemistry, Emeritus
Founding Dean, Mathematical and Physical Sciences
Davis
1939 — 2006

The University of California lost an effective scholar, leader and advocate on June 14, 2006, when Peter A. Rock died at 66 years of age. He was born in 1939 in New Haven, Conn. and attended high school in Lowell, Mass. He received his bachelor's degree in chemistry from Boston University in 1961, but had an interest in the earth sciences as well. He then attended UC Berkeley, where he was awarded a doctorate in physical chemistry and chemical thermodynamics in 1964. Peter joined the faculty of UC Davis that same year, and remained here for his entire career.

Peter served as chair of the Department of Chemistry from 1980 to 1985, and again as vice chair from 1990 to 1994. In 1995, he was appointed to be the founding dean of the Division of Mathematical and Physical Sciences in the College of Letters and Science. The division includes the Departments of Chemistry, Geology, Mathematics, Physics, and Statistics. His appointment was made permanent in 1996 and he continued as dean until 2003. As dean, he showed that a multiple- dean program would work and could be effective in providing leadership to the respective units within the College of Letters and Science. While he was dean, he instituted many of the administrative and academic procedures that are now formal and successful in the College of Letters and Science Deans' Office.

During this time, he also invigorated research and teaching programs within the division and initiated several projects, including renovations of the Chemistry Annex and the Physics/ Geology buildings, as well as the new \$22 million Mathematical Sciences Building, which opened in March 2006. During his tenure, the division saw a 26 percent increase in both faculty and graduate students (headcounts of 29 and 80 respectively) and an 80 percent (\$8 million) increase in extramural funding. He was also a strong supporter for interdisciplinary programs that benefited faculty within the division and the overall campus. Peter was a champion of diversity and actively recruited minority and women for positions in the departments of Mathematical and Physical Sciences. He was a strong supporter of efforts at the undergraduate and graduate level that were designed to increase the pool of minorities and women in science and mathematics. These included the Minority Undergraduate Research Program in Math and Physical Sciences (MURPPS) and the Sloan program in the Chemistry Department.

Peter worked as a scientist in three fields simultaneously. In thermodynamics, which measures the energy differences that accompany chemical reactions, he used his knowledge to understand the chemistry of materials in the Earth, and to design treatments for medical disorders. Much of his early work concerned the subtleties of isotope- exchange reactions and an experimental test of the Born- Oppenheimer approximation using electrochemical cells. His thermodynamic measurements were so precise that virtually all of them were incorporated into the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) source book that provides

fundamental data and is certified to be of the highest quality for other scientist and engineers to reference.

Peter wrote eleven textbooks for students at all levels of chemistry and geochemistry. His first book, Chemical Thermodynamics, was written in 1969 and remains in high demand as a text to this day. Peter was awarded a patent for methods of cleaning contaminated water, and edited two volumes on isotope- exchange reactions and electrochemistry.

Peter tempered his scientific research with an exceptionally broad knowledge of scientific history. He could inspire younger scientists at a moment's notice with the details of major scientific breakthroughs and major scientific failures. He was an advocate for broad reading within science and felt that a career in science was the highest kind of public service.

Peter was a forceful advocate for his college within UC Davis and a formidable opponent in arguments, which were almost invariably discussions about scientific questions and about strategies to increase the worldwide stature of scholarship at the university. Among his proudest achievements was the recruitment of particularly talented faculty to lead the institution for future generations.

With the assistance of friends and family, the university is establishing a scholarship fund, the Peter A. Rock Memorial Fund for Chemistry Students, giving young scientists a start in the field.

William Casey
Bill Jackson
Winston Ko