

**In Memoriam: Joseph F. Bunnett**

**To:** UC Santa Cruz Community

**From:** Ilan Benjamin, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry

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Professor Emeritus Joseph F. Bunnett, a long-time member of the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at UC Santa Cruz, passed away on May 22. Professor Bunnett was one of the early builders of the department in the late 1960s and 1970s. He helped shape the unique character of undergraduate and graduate education on our campus.

Joe was already an outstanding scientist when he came to UC Santa Cruz in 1966 from Brown University. He continued a distinguished career as one of the most nationally and internationally respected physical organic chemists, making his mark not only in publishing seminal papers in the area of organic reaction mechanisms, but also as an educator and leader. He was a founding editor of one of the top American Chemistry Society journals, *Accounts of Chemical Research*. His idea that a journal devoted to short, concise, and critical articles offering easy-to-read overviews of basic research in all areas of chemistry would be highly desirable proved to be visionary.

Joe received numerous honors in recognition of his many outstanding contributions to our understanding of chemical reactions. He was a Guggenheim Fellow, a Fellow of the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, and twice a Fulbright Fellow. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He was elected Honorary Member of numerous European and South American chemical societies, and he was the recipient of the 1992 James Flack Norris Award in Physical Organic Chemistry and the 1995 University of Rochester Distinguished Scholar Medal.

As an educator, research advisor, and colleague, he had an impact on the careers of many scientists. Professor Claude Bernasconi said, "I feel a deep gratitude to the man who was such a great mentor during my graduate student years and later such a wonderful colleague at UC Santa Cruz."

Professor Bakthan Singaram said, “It was a joy interacting with Joe, as he possessed immense chemistry knowledge and a great sense of humor.”

Professor Phil Crews said, “His rigorous approach to experimental design was evident in lectures and also during visits to his office. A framed needlepoint prominently on the wall near his desk reminded everyone, 'Don't make verifiable assumptions!'”

Professor Bunnett was also a strong advocate for undergraduate education and undergraduate research. He established a coveted prize, the Undergraduate Bunnett Research Award, which is awarded to multiple students every year. After his retirement, Joe continued to be active in the department and in the profession. During the 1990s, he focused a lot of attention on the destruction of chemical weapons. He chaired the IUPAC Committee on Chemical Weapons Destruction Technologies. He served on committees of the National Research Council, Department of Defense, and Organization for the Destruction of Chemical Weapons. He participated in and co-chaired several NATO Advanced Research Workshops concerned with chemical weapons. He continued to participate in departmental activities and attend the weekly seminars. To honor his scientific contributions, the department established in 2001, an annual Bunnett Lecture. Held on the first Friday in May, it features a formal lecture that has been presented by some of the most eminent scholars in the field of chemistry. He regularly attended this event, including the one that took place three weeks before his passing.

A memorial service celebrating Joe's long career and accomplishments will take place on Saturday, June 27, at 3 p.m. in the Porter College Dining Hall.