

**RESOLUTION ON THE RETIREMENT OF
PROFESSOR KENNETH AUGUSTUS VAN WORMER**
Adopted by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences
May 16th, 2007

After 53 years Professor Kenneth Augustus Van Wormer is retiring, relinquishing his position as Senior Member of the Tufts Faculty. The Faculty of the Department of Chemical and Biological Engineering join the Faculty of Arts and Sciences to record their appreciation for his many years of dedicated teaching, scholarship and service.

Ken grew up on a dairy farm in upstate New York. He received his Bachelor's Degree in Chemical Engineering in 1952. The following year he was employed by General Electric and then returned to Clarkson, earning his Master's Degree in 1954. Having been hired by Dr. Leighton B. Smith, Chairman of Chemical Engineering, in the Spring of 1954, that Fall Ken literally blew in to Tufts with Hurricane Carol to assume his duties as Instructor. The campus was a shambles. After picking his way to Barnum Hall he stood viewing the famous elephant, Jumbo, when he received a tap on the shoulder from an upperclassman with the greeting, "Hey, Bub, where's your Freshman beanie?" Ken replied to one embarrassed student, "I didn't know faculty had to wear them."

Such traditions would soon fade from the scene, as 1954 was also the year Tufts College would become Tufts University. Ken, like so many other young instructors, began part time study toward his Doctorate at M.I.T. which he received in 1961. His thesis, "The Direct Reduction of Iron Ore by Methane in a Fluidized Bed" was supervised by legendary M.I.T. Chemical Engineering professors W. K. Lewis and H. P. Meissner.

As the Department's programs developed, Ken would be associated with many firsts. He supervised the first Masters degree granted by the department in 1964 and the first PhD degree granted in 1968. These were the first of many Masters and Doctoral students who worked under his wing. In 1961, with the cooperation of M.I.T., he introduced the first course at Tufts requiring the use of digital computers. This was a major undertaking, relative to today, as one would have to travel to M.I.T. just to change a comma.

Responding to the needs of the Department, Ken would become more of a generalist than a specialist. His research, consulting and teaching included such diverse undertakings as solar engineering, process optimization, waste water treatment, thermodynamics of tungsten halogen lamps, spray pond evaporation, and many others. The last doctoral thesis he supervised was in cooperation with the Digital Equipment Corporation and yielded substantial improvements to the early stages of digital chip manufacture.

Teaching, though, was Ken's major emphasis and love. An educator with the passion of a perpetual student, he takes pride in having taught twenty-four different courses, many of these being first time undergraduate or graduate offerings. He loved to lecture and enjoyed the use of many anecdotes and props. He was highly respected by his students as evidenced by many favorable evaluations. In 1998 the Department presented him a Distinguished Teaching Award in recognition of 44 years of excellence in teaching, and

in 2000 he was the recipient of the University-wide Seymour O. Simches Distinguished Teaching Award. He has also received the Department Distinguished Service Award.

While Ken served on many committees, he was most fond of serving on the Board of the Experimental College in the 60's. He is particularly proud of the course "Auditing for Breadth" which he introduced and coordinated with extensive evaluation for several years before its permanent adoption by the Experimental College. Forty years later it is still being offered.

Ken was promoted to Assistant Professor with tenure in 1956, Associate Professor in 1960 and Professor in 1980. Ken served as Acting Chairman from 1967 to 1969 and as Chairman from 1970 to 1980. He had responsibility for overseeing several accreditation reviews for the department, one of these leading to the department's first ever six year accreditation. Also at this time Ken shared a leadership role with other engineering chairmen to ensure that Engineering at Tufts would continue as a separate college and not be reduced to a department.

As the "institutional memory" of the department, Ken chaired the 85th Celebration and dedication of the Chemical Engineering annex to the Chemistry Building. Since that time the department has moved yet again, to 4 Colby Street, and Ken was honored to present, at its Centennial Celebration in 2001, the 100 year history of Chemical Engineering at Tufts, and note the changing of its name to the Department of Chemical and Biological Engineering.

In his second and third years Ken served as a Faculty Resident in Fletcher and then in Carmichael with many memorable events. As laughable as it may seem now, he served on the first committee to determine if men and women could visit each other in dorm rooms on Sunday afternoon. It was ruled that doors remain open and one foot must be on the floor.

As a Faculty Resident Ken took his meals at Carmichael Dining Hall, where in 1956 fate would intervene when he introduced himself to a young lady, Charlanne Bailey, a physical therapy student from then-affiliated Bouve-Boston School. In June Ken and Charlanne will celebrate 50 years of marriage. The four Van Wormer children would become 4th generation Tufts graduates on Charlanne's side, adding to a legacy of well over 30 related family alumni. Two of the children would graduate as Chemical Engineers and three would bear the experience of having their father as their professor.

Ken has devoted his entire life to education and has known many Tufts Presidents, Deans and Colleagues. He has been a part of the lives of hundreds of students and lived through the transition of carbon copies to Xerox and slide rules to calculators and computers. His colleagues now thank him for a job well done and wish him and Charlanne the best in the years to come.

Be it resolved that this resolution be spread on the minutes of the faculty of Arts, Sciences and Engineering and that a copy be handed to Professor Van Wormer.

