RESOLUTION ON THE RETIREMENT OF
PROFESSOR NAK-HO SUNG
May 15, 2013

After 35 years, Nak-ho Sung is retiring and relinquishing his position as Professor of Chemical Engineering. The faculty of the Department of Chemical and Biological Engineering join with the Faculty of Arts, Sciences and Engineering to record their appreciation for his many years of teaching, research, scholarship and service.

After earning a B.S. in Chemical Engineering in 1964 from Seoul National University in South Korea, Nak-ho came to the United States to pursue postgraduate study in Physical Chemistry at the University of Chicago. In 1967 he was awarded the M.S. in Physical Chemistry.

The Hollywood blockbuster that year was “The Graduate,” in which young Benjamin Braddock, played by Dustin Hoffman, was famously advised to get into “plastics.” It remains unclear whether he saw the film, or had been similarly advised in real life. But the record will show that Nak-ho’s next move was to enroll as a pre-doctoral student in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, to pursue his interest in polymers.

In June of 1972 MIT awarded Nak-ho the Sc.D. in Materials Science and Engineering. The same department persuaded him to stay on as a Lecturer, Research Associate and, from 1976 to 1978, Assistant Professor.

Somewhere along the way – it could have been at Seoul National University, where they were both undergraduates, or MIT, where they were on the faculty of the same department – Nak-ho met the woman who would become his long-time collaborator and soul-mate, Dr. C.S.P. “Sookie” Sung, now Professor Emeritus of Chemistry at the University of Connecticut.

Fortunately for Tufts, there was a tenure track opening in 1978 for an Assistant Professor of Chemical Engineering and Nak-ho was persuaded to make the move from Cambridge to Medford.

He quickly developed what would become a highly regarded research program at Tufts, which focused on several areas of applied materials science: Polymer Structure and Properties; Processing and Properties of Composite Materials; Surface, Interface and Adhesion Phenomena; and Diffusion and Sorption in Polymers. In 1980 his impressive body of scholarship earned Nak-ho tenure with promotion to Associate Professor. Five years later, he became Professor of Chemical Engineering.

Nak-ho introduced several new undergraduate and graduate courses here in materials science and engineering. He supervised or co-supervised some 30 undergraduate research projects, and 40 M.S and Ph.D. thesis projects. Many of those whom he mentored have enjoyed productive
and rewarding careers in industry and academia, much to the benefit of Tufts’ reputation both here and abroad.

Nak-ho has also distinguished himself by his service as a member of important university committees including the Tenure and Promotion Committee, the Engineering College Executive Committee, and the Budget and Priorities Committee; and to the Chemical (now Chemical and Biological) Engineering Department, as chair of its Graduate Program Committee and Doctoral Examination Committee, and, last but by no means least, as Department Chair between 2007 and 2010, when his fairness and integrity were deeply appreciated.

The department is particularly pleased that Nak-ho is the recipient of this year’s Engineering Seymour Simches Award for Distinguished Teaching and Advising.

It is also impossible to overlook Nak-ho’s many activities and the honors he has received as a pillar of this country’s very large community of South Korea-born scientists and engineers. He is a member of the Korean National Academy of Engineering. In 2012 he was awarded both the Outstanding Service Award of The Korean American Scientists and Engineers Association, and the Overseas Scientists and Engineers Award of the Korean Ministry of Science & Education, four years after the government in Seoul awarded Nak-ho the National Medal of Honor-First Order.

The faculty of the Chemical and Engineering Department, and his many former students, are very grateful that Nak-ho chose to make Tufts his home these past 35 years. We will miss his calm demeanor and sage advice. But we will smile, knowing that he will be spending much of his time with his wonderful family and indulging his long-time passion for golf.

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 Sung.