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07/29/2003 10:17 AM

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Subject Professor David Fossan

Members of the university,

It is my sad duty to inform you that Professor David B. Fossan of the Physics and Astronomy department passed away on Sunday following a heart attack while swimming at Smith Point Park.

David came to Stony Brook in 1965 as one of the early developers of the physics department. His area of specialty was nuclear physics, and he was critical to the creation of a program in nuclear physics at Stony Brook that has been consistently ranked amongst the best few in the U.S. He was a leader in developing techniques for using the gamma-ray decay properties of atomic nuclei to understand how quantum systems of nucleons behave. In the last part of his career he studied how nuclear systems behave when carrying large amounts of angular momentum. The results of his body of work led to better theoretical understanding of strongly interacting quantum systems.

He was known and respected by physicists throughout the world. Both because of his record of accomplishments and also because of his very warm and forthright style, he served on numerous committees and organizing bodies that influenced the way the so-called "high spin" nuclear physics is done. For example he was a founding member of a group that conceived of, and built, the world's most powerful gamma-ray detector facility "Gammisphere" now situated at the DOE's Argonne National Laboratory and used by an international community of physicists.

His colleagues knew him as a person dedicated to his field and students. He was wonderfully prolific in research with more than two hundred fifty articles in refereed journals. He mentored more than twenty Ph.D. students and numerous post-doctoral fellows many of whom have gone on to distinguished careers. In recognition of his outstanding research career he received the inaugural SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Scholarship and Creative Activities last year.

He enjoyed teaching having at one time or another taught many of the courses in the physics curriculum, but he was especially dedicated and enjoyed teaching the introductory courses. In all respects he was an exemplary citizen of the university. David along with his wife Ann over many years made countless students and visitors feel at home here at Stony Brook.

The accident occurred during an outing he had arranged for his research group of faculty colleagues, postdocs, graduate, and undergraduate students.

Our university is lessened by his passing, and our condolences go to his family and friends. A memorial service is being planned.