

# DESERET Morning News

## University of Utah political professor, mentor J.D. Williams dies

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For decades, when an astute and informed political opinion was sought in Utah, the man who got the call was J.D. Williams.

Dr. Williams, 81, died Monday evening at his home. He was a professor of politics at the University of Utah, first director of the university's Hinckley Institute of Politics, a candidate for both national and state offices and confidante and adviser to many of the state's leading politicians. He had been under hospice care in recent weeks.

"He was the Mount Rushmore of intellectual inquiry in Utah," said Pat Shea, a local attorney and longtime Democratic leader.

Dr. Williams was noted for his personal interactions with the students who came under his purview. "He loved his students and went out of his way to help them," said his wife, Barbara Wright Williams. Those who lagged behind in class were invited to personal sessions, where he mentored them individually to avoid having to fail them. "He had many grateful students," she said.

Dr. Williams was a native of Salt Lake City, and after graduation from a local high school, he had a scholarship to Stanford University. He finished his course work there in three years and then married Barbara.

They had four children, all of whom survive: Kirk, Gill (Cindy) and Taylor (Sheryl), all of Utah; and Kimberli D'Agostina, of Colorado. Dr. Williams also is survived by 12 grandchildren.

After working for a time in the Library of Congress and serving a two-year fellowship at Harvard University, Dr. Williams joined the faculty at the University of Utah.

His personal philosophy that every American should be involved in politics colored all of his teaching, his wife said. He put those convictions into practice in unsuccessful bids for the U.S. Senate and the Utah House. "He never let (his failures to gain office) knock him down," she said.

If he did not ever attain public office, he mentored many others who did. Among those who interned under his leadership were U.S. Rep. Rob Bishop, R-Utah; and Randy Horiuchi, current member of the Salt Lake County Council. Dozens of others who did not seek office were and are influential in political party leadership, business, law, government, the media and civic endeavors.

Karl Rove, who recently resigned from President Bush's inner circle, said that Dr. Williams taught him that "no matter where you are in the political spectrum, you can love this country."

When Dr. Williams retired from the U. in 1992, after 40 years of teaching, he said that he had tried to be nonpartisan, fair and enthusiastic. While he maintained evenhanded approaches in the classroom, it was rare that he was not called upon to give the Democratic viewpoint in political situations.

"He always had an opinion," said his wife. Shea added that despite those strong opinions, Dr. Williams had a "charm" that buffered his comments.

From 1965 to 1975, Dr. Williams was director of the Hinckley Institute of Politics, providing the "vision and passion" that gave life to the institute, said Kirk L. Jowers, the institute's current director.

The institute "joins with thousands of former colleagues, students and interns in mourning the passing"

of Dr. Williams, Jowers said. The late professor's "lasting legacy" will be his role in transforming the "best and brightest students at the university into some of the nation's most influential and valued public servants."

"The political landscape of our state and nation will echo with J.D.'s fervor and zeal for generations as thousands of his students on the left and right fulfill his vision of passionate public service and devotion to our founding constitutional principles."

Wayne Holland, current Utah Democratic Party chairman, praised Dr. Williams as "an institute in the state of Utah. He will be sorely missed. And not just by the Democrats. He thought everyone should be involved in politics."

A memorial service will be held Sept. 22 (the first non-football Saturday, Dr. Williams' wife noted) at the university. Further details will be announced at a later date.

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