MEMORIAL RESOLUTION OF THE FACULTY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

ON THE DEATH OF THE EMERITUS PROFESSOR ALTON C. JOHNSON

Dr. Alton Johnson passed away on December 11, 1998. He is survived by his wife, Virginia Kroener Johnson, two sons, Brian (Betsy) and Vance, and granddaughter Erica Pearl Johnson. During his thirty-three year career at the UW-Madison, Dr. Johnson could not have provided more dedicated service to this institution.

On April 27, 1924 he was born in Argyle, Wisconsin, to Herman and Cora Johnson. Before he began his long and distinguished academic career, Dr. Johnson served his country with the 66th Division in the European Theatre during World War II. Then, after receiving his bachelor of arts degree (Magna Cum Laude) in economics from St. Olaf College in 1949, and both a master of business administration in 1953 and Ph.D. in personnel management and industrial management in 1957 from UW-Madison, he was immediately hired to the faculty at this campus.

Dr. Johnson was deeply committed to his teaching and to his students. He wanted to share as much of his diversified knowledge and expertise as possible. Thus, during his career Dr. Johnson taught nearly every course in the Department of Management and Human Resources as well as other courses for the School of Business and the university. This generous and prolific outlook is also reflected in his portfolio of publications that contain topics ranging from pension plans to the student’s transition into the work world. Also a large part of his research included health care administration before it became the controversial hot topic of today, demonstrating his exceptional ability to envision the future and what problems it may hold. During this period many others supported his work as shown through grants from the Ford Foundation, the U.S. Office of Education, the U.S. Department of Labor, the General Electric Research Foundation, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, and the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

In addition to his efforts with research and in the classroom, Dr. Johnson somehow found the time and energy to serve on multiple committees. As chair of the Management Department, the Faculty Commission on Faculty Compensation, the Personnel Classification Committee, and a member of the School of Business Subcommittee, the Executive Committee of the Social Studies Division, the Industrial Relations Research Institute, Health Services Administration Executive Committee, and UW Faculty Senate, his contributions were invaluable.

Thankfully, his hard work and commitment did not go unnoticed. Dr. Johnson received multiple honors and awards nationwide including “Who’s Who in America,” “Who’s Who in American Education,” and membership into the Beta Gamma Sigma in recognition of scholarly achievement and academic performance in the field of business. He brought distinction to himself as well as enhanced the reputation of the university as an institution of higher learning.

Yet, perhaps his greatest contribution was Dr. Johnson’s immeasurable impact in the formation and growth of the Management and Human Resources Department. In the late 1960’s and early 1970’s he spearheaded the hiring of several young, eager, new faculty to build the department into a research powerhouse. He succeeded spectacularly, attracting scholars that collectively achieved a strong national presence that continues today. While doing so, he served not only as chair, but also as cheerleader, mentor, counselor, and conflict-resolver. The multiple roles that he fulfilled so adroitly were appreciated and envied by all; his performance in those roles remains the standard for those who have followed as chair. He was greatly respected for his integrity, dependability, and advice as well as his knack for subtle humor.

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Overall, Dr. Alton Johnson displayed excellence in all phases of his career as a teacher, scholar, author, administrator, and mentor.

MEMORIAL COMMITTEE
Professor Herbert Heneman
Professor Donald Schwab