Memorial Resolution of the Faculty of the University of Wisconsin–Madison
On the Death of Professor Emeritus John W. Suttie

John W. Suttie, celebrated scientist and professor of Biochemistry and Nutritional Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, died on December 21, 2020 in Green Valley, Arizona, at 86. He was a nationally recognized and influential researcher, scholar, and advocate for the scientific community, and to his peers and colleagues, a cherished friend, storyteller, collaborator and pioneer.

Suttie was born and raised on a dairy farm in the small town of Galesville, Wisconsin, where the foundation for his long career in science was laid in a one-room schoolhouse. Suttie studied fluorosis as an undergraduate with Professor Paul Phillips, subsequently earning a B.S. (1957), M.S. (1958), and Ph.D (1960) in Biochemistry from UW-Madison. He spent a year as an NIH Postdoctoral Fellow at the National Institute for Medical Research in England, returning to UW-Madison in 1961 to join the Department of Biochemistry as a professor. Suttie also became professor and chair of the Department of Nutritional Sciences, and held an affiliate faculty role with the UW Institute on Aging and Adult Life. He retired from the university as Professor Emeritus in 2001.

Suttie was known for his outstanding work on blood clotting, including the metabolism and mode of action of vitamin K, and fluoride toxicity. Suttie’s lab was a vibrant center for vitamin K research, and Suttie himself served as a world expert on vitamin K and the anticoagulants dicumarol and Warfarin. His interest in nutrition and the environment also led to his emergence as an expert consultant on fluoride toxicity and the effect of fluoride accumulation in the skeleton. His research provided a baseline for assessing hazards, defining emission standards, and enacting regulations of fluoride emissions across the country. Over his long career, Suttie published more than 300 journal articles on vitamin K function and on the nutritional toxicology of fluoride.

Suttie’s deep commitment to advancing science was evident in his active involvement in numerous leadership and committee roles both on campus and well beyond. He served as Director of the Center for Coagulation Research, President of the American Institute of Nutrition (now American Society for Nutrition), and President and Board Chairman of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology, the major national life sciences society. As chair of Nutritional Sciences (1988-1997), Suttie re-invigorated the department’s impact across campus, accomplished in part by creation of the Interdepartmental Graduate Program in Nutritional Sciences and attaining a highly competitive NIH nutrition training grant. As editor of the Journal of Nutrition (1998-2003) he expanded its scope and was founding editor of Advances in Nutrition (2010-2014), the latter now the most highly cited of the four journals published by the American Society of Nutrition. Suttie’s work enhanced the reputation of the College of Agricultural & Life Sciences (CALS) as a nationally prominent center for research in biochemical, human and animal nutrition.

Suttie was recognized by the scientific community as an extraordinary scholar and researcher, earning such prestigious awards as the Mead Johnson Award of the American Institute of Nutrition, the Osborne & Mendel Award, the Bristol-Myers Squibb/Mead Johnson Award for Distinguished Achievement in Nutrition Research, the Conrad Elvehjem Award, and numerous professorships and lectureships. He was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 1996.
Suttie’s work helped to establish national nutrition policy. He played an important role in increasing the NIH budget by appearing many times before Congress to speak of the importance of federal funding and negotiating on behalf of nutrition scientists. His advocacy was considered a great service to the scientific community in general, and his achievements helped raise the visibility of CALS and UW-Madison on the national stage.

Suttie influenced generations of student scientists, training 45 graduate students and 27 postdoctoral scientists, and serving as lead instructor of Biochemistry 501, a key course in the Biochemistry undergraduate curriculum. He authored the highly-regarded *Introduction to Biochemistry* textbook for undergraduates, and played a key role in reorganizing Biochemistry’s graduate curriculum.

By all accounts from those who knew him, Suttie was, resoundingly, even more than an exceptional scientist and scholar. He was an active and vibrant member of the community, and a challenging and supportive colleague with a hearty sense of humor. He was a remarkable, caring person with a heartwarming way of connecting, and an unforgettable smile.

“Because of his great sense of humor, John made life pleasurable for everyone around him,” said Biochemistry Professor Emeritus Hector DeLuca, “yet he was strong and resolute when required. John Suttie is a largely unsung champion of the University of Wisconsin-Madison at all levels, one of the most highly regarded members of the Department of Biochemistry and of Nutrition. Both I and the University will forever miss him.”