Memorial Resolution of the Faculty of the University of Wisconsin–Madison
On the Death of Professor Emeritus Edward F. Jackson

Edward F. Jackson, Professor Emeritus and fifth chair of the Department of Medical Physics, passed away in Madison, Wisconsin on June 2, 2020 at the age of 58 after a ten-month battle with illness. Ed is survived by his wife Sondra Jackson, his daughter Michelle Jackson, and his son Jonathan Jackson. Medical Physics is the field entrusted to train new generations of medically-oriented physicists to create new and more effective medical imaging and patient treatment devices, and to assure safe and effective use of these instruments when caring for patients. Ed, through his leadership roles, devoted his life to assuring that all the graduates of his field were trained to be the future leaders of the medical physics disciplines here in the United States and around the world.

Ed was born in Wilsonville, Alabama. He earned a bachelor’s and master’s degree in physics from Auburn University and his Ph.D. in biophysics at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. Prior to joining the faculty at the University of Wisconsin - Madison in 2013 as the Chair of the Department of Medical Physics, Ed was a faculty member at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, where he served in a series of leadership roles. His research focused on quantitative imaging, a technique in which data are extracted from medical images to measure disease biomarkers. Ed was committed to pushing the boundaries of radiology and medical physics to improve the diagnosis and treatment of cancer. Through worldwide collaborations, groups he led have facilitated standards and studies that have benefited patients and advanced the work of the global medical imaging community.

The Folkert Belzer Lifetime Achievement Award in the UW School of Medicine and Public Health was conferred to Ed posthumously in October 2020. As Dean Robert Golden remarked at the ceremony, “Ed’s infectious commitment to excellence, diversity, and collaboration advanced the very best traditions of the department and our school. He also served in several additional key institutional leadership roles and received invitations on a regular basis to serve in the highest levels of leadership at national and international organizations.”

Ed served in the leadership of numerous professional societies and, as the leader of the Quantitative Imaging Biomarker Alliance (the so-called “QIBA”), he marshalled the combined efforts of the Radiological Society of North America (RSNA), the American Association of Physicists in Medicine (AAPM), and federal agencies including the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and the National Institutes of Science and Technology (NIST), to re-institute the highest level of scientific rigor into imaging-based clinical sciences. He served as Co-Chair and Chair for QIBA and delivered numerous plenary talks on quantitative imaging biomarkers until his untimely passing.

Ed was an exceptionally devoted department chair, an exemplary leader in the medical physics profession, and a caring professor to his students. As the department chair, Ed always patiently listened to others, genuinely seeking to understand their points of view, and then provided his profound insight to help a conversation converge on a mutually acceptable solution. Ed was indeed a natural born leader with remarkable communication skills.

Ed was also an excellent teacher and was passionate about providing outstanding education to students. Ed served on numerous panels and committees that focused on high quality medical physics education. He served as the Education Council Chair at our professional society, AAPM, and guided the evolution of medical physics education in the United States. He recently led a curriculum transformation in our Medical Physics department to prepare our students to embrace a new knowledge structure founded upon fundamental principles of physics and mathematics, so that our graduates can continue to emerge as future leaders in the medical physics discipline.
Ed was an exceptional mentor, deeply admired and loved by his students. While at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center, Ed received the William Randolph Hearst Foundation Faculty Achievement Award in Education in 2007 (at this time he had already served on more than 60 student advisory, examining and supervisory committees). He became a member of the University of Texas Academy of Health Science Education in 2012. In the words of one of his former students: “I have seen you strive to enhance the experience, opportunities and career of each and every one of your students. Whether our problems stemmed from classes, research or professional relations you were always there to listen, advise, help and teach…Part of our success is your success and we thank you for every minute.”

His impact on the future generation of medical physicists is also reflected in this comment from a student Ed taught in a collaboration between UW-Madison Medical Physics and the People’s Republic of China: “You have indeed made a great difference, both to us as well as to the development of medical physics in China. It was you and your team that empowered us with stronger wings to fly in the sky of medical physics. And we will carry on with this spirit and support to make some differences in the medical physics profession in China.”

One of Ed’s memorable traits was his genuinely humble nature. If he were with us today, he would be surprised at just how greatly he has touched the lives of others, and how much of an impact he had on the Department of Medical Physics and his profession. He is truly our unsung hero at UW-Madison. We are honored to dedicate this Faculty Senate Memorial Resolution to the late Prof. Edward F. Jackson.

Memorial Committee
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