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MEMORIAL DEDICATION- JOHN HOWARTH

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MEMORIAL DEDICATION



Photo courtesy of the University of New Mexico Honors Program

JOHN HOWARTH

With great sadness we learned that John Howarth, former President of NCHC (1988), passed away February 21, 2011. He was a leading figure in honors education and NCHC from its earliest days when he was appointed director of the University of New Mexico Honors Program in 1971.

John studied physics at Cambridge University and received his PhD in physics from the University of London in 1963. He was then invited to New Mexico to serve as a radiological physicist at the Lovelace Clinic in New Mexico and joined the physics department at the University of New Mexico in 1964. His work as honors director at New Mexico was followed by his appointment as honors director at the University of Maryland, College Park in 1978. Though John was also a member of the physics department at UMCP, the possibilities of honors education captured his imagination more and more.

While at the University of Maryland, John introduced several innovative approaches to honors education that remain important today. He introduced the idea of learning communities into the honors curriculum and developed that model of education to reach out to high school teachers in the Washington D.C. area, arranging for them to spend a sabbatical leave embedded in the Maryland honors program. He integrated various developmental models, including the work of William Perry, into the honors program, and he became widely known as an innovator and explorer both in his own classes and the NCHC. He spoke frequently about his insights into education and the processes of learning at national and regional conferences. His love of learning and of learning about learning became a defining and enduring characteristic of NCHC.

In 1988 John Howarth assumed the presidency of NCHC. That he saw a larger role for NCHC in American higher education was evident in his presidential address, “Making the World a Better Place,” a phrase he used long before it became a commonplace. For John Howarth, education and especially honors education was always a transformative process on individual, community, societal, and global levels. In 1994 John Howarth received an Honorary Doctor of Science degree for his contribution to his discipline and to honors education from the State University of New York at Plattsburgh.

Most of all, those of us who were fortunate to know and work with John Howarth found in him an inspiring friend, a tireless spirit, a challenging intellect, and a wise and thoughtful leader. His legacy in NCHC is one from which we all continue to benefit and for which we will always be grateful.

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