

VII. STANDING COMMITTEES**B. Finance, Audit and Facilities Committee**

Naming of the outdoor plaza bordered on three sides by the Physics/Astronomy Building the “Mark McDermott Plaza.”

RECOMMENDED ACTION

The administration and the Finance, Audit and Facilities Committee recommend the outdoor plaza bordered on three sides by the Physics/Astronomy Building be named the “Mark McDermott Plaza.”

BACKGROUND

Mark McDermott was born in Yakima, Washington in 1930. He graduated from Whitman College in 1952 and went on to Columbia University. While at Columbia, he married fellow graduate student Lillian Christie, who later also became a physics professor at the University of Washington. After continuing his research at the University of Illinois and Columbia, Mark joined the University of Washington Physics Department.

Mark’s research on the structure of atomic nuclei led to an understanding of the distribution of charge and magnetism in medium to heavy nuclei. He was also a dedicated and successful teacher who had good rapport with his students and took a special interest in the instructional laboratories, from the introductory to the advanced level.

Mark served as chair of the Department of Physics from 1984 to 1994. As chair, he was ahead of the times in recognizing the importance of having women physicists on the faculty. He was also the scientific sparkplug for the new Physics and Astronomy Building, providing the department’s perspective on instructional facilities, research laboratories with low background interference, and the critical role of open space and chalkboards. The building, completed on schedule and under budget in 1994, became a comfortable home for the Department thanks to Mark’s careful planning. His enthusiastic support for new proposals helped create the Institute for Nuclear Theory (the Department of Energy’s national visitor institute established in 1990 at UW), the University of Washington’s Sudbury Neutrino Observatory group, and a northwest consortium to construct and operate an intense X-ray source at Argonne’s Advanced Photon Source.

Mark played a major role in University of Washington affairs. Between 1981 and 1983, he served as the University’s Faculty Legislative Representative to the Washington State legislature. He was also active in the University’s Faculty Senate, for which he served as Vice-Chair and Chair between 1996 and 1998. In the wider physics community, Mark served the American Physical Society as a member of the site selection committee for the American Center for Physics and

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as a member and Chair of the Constitution and Bylaws committee. In 1999, his deep interest in the history of physics led to his membership on the Development Board of the Center for the History of Physics, where he was instrumental in launching the Center's first fund-raising campaign: History that Matters.

Away from the academic world, Mark enjoyed a wide range of pursuits, including hiking and bird watching, often with his much-cherished family. He was an excellent cook and an enthusiastic bicyclist, regularly commuting whatever the weather. He read extensively, especially material relating to history and national affairs.

As teacher, researcher, University Legislative Representative, department chair, chair of the Senate, and watchdog over the physics building construction, Mark came in contact with individuals of varied backgrounds. He brought a friendly, gracious manner to all these interactions. He was invariably a kind and considerate person but also one with strong opinions and clear goals. Coupled with a sense of purpose and good judgment, his personal qualities made him effective in bringing important initiatives to successful conclusions. He is greatly missed by his many friends in the University and the wider physics community.

The University Names Committee reviewed and unanimously approved the proposal by the College of Arts and Sciences that the outdoor plaza bordered by the three parts of the Physics/Astronomy Building be named the "Mark McDermott Plaza."