

South Dakota School of Mines and Technology
501 E. Saint Joseph St.
Rapid City, SD 57701-3995

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

School of Mines remembers President Wharton's legacy

The School of Mines community is deeply saddened by the sudden passing of President Robert A. Wharton, Ph.D. An outdoor memorial tribute service will be held at 2 p.m. on Monday, Sept. 24 in the quad on the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology campus. In lieu of flowers, donations may be directed to Dr. Robert A. Wharton Scholarship, SDSM&T Foundation, Boy Scouts of America Black Hills Area Council or Defenders of Wildlife. Funeral arrangements are being handled by Osheim & Schmidt Funeral Home.

Dedicated to the vision of establishing the South Dakota School of Mines and Technology as a national and global center of excellence in engineering, science and technology, President Wharton leaves a legacy of leadership and commitment to academic quality, research, economic development and community service.

Dr. Jack R. Warner, executive director and CEO of the South Dakota Board of Regents, said President Wharton will be remembered for his extraordinary leadership and advancement of the university. "He really has made this a stronger academic place. He has advanced the research agenda. But also, you can see physically the new addition to the science building," Dr. Warner said, referring to the Chemical and Biological Engineering/Chemistry Building that opened in 2011. He also pointed to the 33,000-square-foot James E. Martin Paleontology Research Laboratory, renovated residence halls and expansion of the Surbeck Center, all of which occurred under President Wharton's watch. "These are all physical assets he has been responsible for advancing during his time here. What we know about him is that this is a stronger institution for his leadership here and we are all grateful."

Committed to cutting-edge research in a number of important areas of science and engineering, Wharton has championed the university's prominence in vital research areas and has significantly expanded the School of Mines research enterprise and graduate programs. During his tenure, annual research funding tripled from \$10.1 million awarded in fiscal year 2008 to \$35 million awarded in 2010, the highest amount of funding in the history of the university. Also under his leadership, the university's teaching and research facilities have undergone significant renovation and expansion.

During Wharton's tenure, he collaborated with private developers who built new private student apartments to aid recruitment efforts and alleviate the campus student housing shortage. He supported the establishment of the new Newman Center, built under the auspices of the Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help and in partnership with the Diocese of Rapid City to serve students from the School of Mines, as well as other area colleges and the campus community.

President Wharton invested in human capital, moving the institution forward as the School of Mines educates an expanding and increasingly diverse student body. Under his direction, the School of Mines was becoming a national leader in developing best practices for the successful delivery of STEM education at the university level. Having spearheaded the creation of a campus-wide council on diversity, Wharton positioned the institution to successfully recruit female faculty and students and dramatically improve the success of Native American students in engineering and science disciplines. He also led the effort to establish a campus Veteran's Resource Center. The School of Mines has achieved national distinction as a military friendly campus the past four years.

In 2009, Wharton initiated the Mines Medal, a national award presented by the School of Mines to honor engineers and scientists who have demonstrated exceptional leadership and innovation. The annual award highlights the significant role these individuals play to ensure the United States global preeminence in engineering and science.

Also during his tenure, Wharton led the institution in implementing continuous quality improvement, securing resources during a \$50-million capital campaign, increasing enrollment while raising admissions standards and completing the university's first strategic plan.

Wharton's leadership and scientific career spans several decades in academia, federal service and the private sector. Wharton received his Ph.D. in botany from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and his B.A. in botany and M.A. in biology from Humboldt State University. Prior to joining the School of Mines, President Wharton served as provost and vice president for academic affairs at Idaho State University (ISU). At ISU, he successfully led the first campus-wide effort to implement and align evidence-based strategic planning, budgeting, and assessment and led student recruitment and retention efforts that resulted in a four percent enrollment increase. Wharton was a tenured professor of biology at ISU and served as its chief research officer, leading the university's efforts to foster, support and expand its research enterprise.

Instrumental in the School of Mines rise as a world class technological university, Wharton had been nominated for membership on the National Science Board. He had also attended the Harvard Institute for Educational Management and the Stanford Graduate School of Business, Stanford Executive Program, and has served as the executive officer for the National Science Foundation's Office of Polar Programs in the federal government's Senior Executive Service.

Having participated in 11 expeditions to the Antarctic, President Wharton was a recipient of the United States Antarctic Service Medal and served on the National Research Council's Polar Research Board. He has been a visiting senior scientist at NASA headquarters in Washington, D.C.; an executive vice president for the Institute of Management Studies in Reno, Nev.; and vice president for research and research professor at the Desert Research Institute. He was an advisor to the Secretary of Energy as an appointee to the National Coal Council and a member of the Council on Competitiveness. Wharton served as co-chair of the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) Energy Forum and also initiated and led a national effort focused on re-establishing a federal role in mining research and development. He was a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Royal Geographical Society, the Explorers Club and a member of Sigma Xi.

School of Mines Provost Duane Hrncir, Ph.D., has been designated as President (Acting). With more than 30 years of experience in research and administration, Dr. Hrncir previously served as dean of the College of Science and Letters at the School of Mines; the chemistry department chair and faculty at the University of Texas at Dallas; and interim vice president for academic affairs at Mesa State College.

President Wharton was married to Dr. Carolyn R. Fassi Wharton, a native of St. Louis, Missouri. Dr. Fassi Wharton has 20 years of experience working in health care administration at the federal, state, and local levels, in private industry and in academia as a faculty member. He is also survived by one son, Matt Wharton of Loveland, Colo.; two grandchildren; one brother and one sister.

Our thoughts and prayers are with President Wharton's wife, First Lady Dr. Carolyn Fassi Wharton, and his family, as well as all of our campus family, faculty, staff and students. We are deeply grateful for President Wharton's legacy, leadership and service to the School of Mines.

###

MEDIA CONTACT

Fran LeFort

Media Relations Manager

(605) 394-6082

Fran.LeFort@sdsmt.edu