IN MEMORIAM
LOWELL J. BETHEL

Lowell J. “Sonny” Bethel was born on March 4, 1937, and grew up in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was educated in Philadelphia public schools and then received both bachelor and master’s degrees from Temple University (1961 and 1967). He went on to earn a second master’s degree (1971) and his Doctorate of Education degree (1974) from the University of Pennsylvania. During the time that he was earning his advanced degrees, Lowell taught mathematics and science courses, including biology, chemistry, and physical science, at both the elementary and secondary levels in the School District of Philadelphia.

In 1974, Lowell joined the faculty at The University of Texas at Austin in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, where he served for the next thirty-four years, rising to the rank of full professor. He was an active member and leader in science education, teaching both undergraduate and graduate courses, conducting many research projects, and supervising many graduate students. Lowell was a member of and presented research papers at meetings of the American Education Research Association, the School Science and Mathematics Association, the National Association for Research in Science Teaching, the National Science Teachers Association, the Association for Science Teacher Education, the Texas Science Academy, the Conference for the Advancement of Science Teaching, and the Southwest Educational Research Association. Lowell’s research interests included: teaching science in urban schools, concept development in urban children, the development of attitudes toward science, science in-service education, teacher education, and middle school in-service development.

Lowell served as assistant dean, Office of Field Experiences, in the College of Education and as graduate adviser in science education for many years. In addition, he also served as a program officer in the Division of Learning in Formal and Informal Settings at the National Science Foundation for several years. While at Texas, he was the recipient of several science and teacher education research grants from the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Department of Education, the U.S. Department of Energy, the Texas Education Agency, and the University Research Institute. Lowell was co-author of Houghton Mifflin Science Discovery Works, an elementary school science textbook series. He also wrote and developed elementary science lessons for BSCS and D.C. Heath publishing companies. During his years in Texas, Lowell also served as a consultant to many school systems, publishing companies, education service centers, and educational research laboratories. He was active in the public schools by teaching science demonstration lessons, judging science fairs, and conducting science in-service workshops.

In 1991, Lowell was a recipient of the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA) Distinguished Service to Science Education Award. This award honors NSTA members who, through active leadership and scholarly endeavor over a significant period of time, have made extraordinary contributions to the advancement of education in the sciences and science teaching.

Lowell retired from the faculty in the fall of 2008, in large part because of continuing medical difficulties, and was awarded the title emeritus professor, science education. He passed away on January 3, 2009. He will be remembered fondly by his many students and colleagues as a wonderful mentor and tireless advocate for the welfare of all. His guidance and encouragement sustained and supported many junior faculty members and graduate students, and as a pioneering African-American faculty member, he served as a mentor and guide for
many young scholars of color. He was always willing to talk with students and colleagues about science, about teaching, about University life, and about the world. Eager to share his experiences from classroom and informal education, from research and administration, Lowell was an invaluable member of the faculty in his department, graduate program, college, and University.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors James Barufaldi (chair), Lawrence D. Abraham, and Jill A. Marshall.

Distributed to the dean of the College of Education, the executive vice president and provost, and the president on April 27, 2010. This resolution is posted under “Memorials” at: http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.