DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR
KENT S. BUTLER

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Kent S. Butler associate dean, Architecture, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM
KENT S. BUTLER

Associate Professor Kent Butler of the School of Architecture and the graduate program in community and regional planning (CRP) died in a hiking accident on May 13, 2011. Professor Butler was sixty years old at the time of his death, and he had been a faculty member at The University of Texas at Austin for thirty-three years. He always seemed to be smiling and was known for spending generous time with his family, students, and colleagues. Kent was, above all, dedicated to the care and love of his family. He is survived by his beloved children, Lana Butler, Emily Butler, Josh Butler, and Nick Kincaid; and his beloved wife, Christy; son-in-law, Dave Kaz; brother, Bruce Butler; sister-in-law, Phyllis Butler; sister, Lind Butler; brother-in-law, Bill Connolly; and an enormous extended family and host of friends.

Kent was the ultimate planner: he was an effective and engaging speaker with broad expertise in community planning and resource management, and he was connected to, and respected by, a large and varied network of professionals and advocates. He was a tireless community activist in the best sense, initiating many collaborative projects and giving voice to many disparate groups around a common issue. Kent’s ability to gain agreement, if not consensus, over sensitive environmental and water resource issues arising from the growth of communities was widely recognized. Already accomplished, he furthered his capacity to enhance collaboration through certification in mediation and training in public policy dispute resolution through The University of Texas at Austin School of Law.

A native Texan, much of Kent’s work was focused on local and statewide sustainability initiatives. Some of his projects of note included the regional vision for the Galveston Bay Estuary Program, the creation of a system to evaluate proposed large-scale coastal erosion and control, the promotion of the Texas Triangle as a megaregion, the development of the first regional habitat conservation plan for endangered species in the Balcones Canyonlands of Central Texas, and water planning for the establishment of the Barton Springs/Edwards Aquifer Conservation District.

Kent completed bachelor’s, master’s, and doctoral degrees in environmental science, land and water resources management, and land resources, respectively, at the University of Wisconsin at Madison and began his academic career as an assistant professor at The University of Texas at Austin in 1978. He served as director of the CRP program from 1993 to 1997 and again from 2004 until the time of his death. As director, Kent oversaw and managed two major curriculum overhauls, an accreditation cycle, and a marked expansion of faculty resources. He had also served as the associate dean for research and operations for the School of Architecture since 2004. Kent took a two-year sabbatical from 1986 to 1988 to help create, and serve as director of, the Natural Resources Division for the Lower Colorado River Authority.

During his time at The University of Texas of Austin, Professor Butler taught twenty-one different graduate courses and one undergraduate course, with subject matters varying from water resources and coastal zone management to urban infrastructure as well as a variety of other environmental topics. He served on eighteen dissertation committees and over two hundred report and thesis committees. His numerous consulting and research projects, as well as community service projects, always sought to extend the cutting edge of practice...
and enriched his course offerings with state-of-the-art insights. Kent was one of the first on
campus to apply Geographic Information Systems technology to the presentation and analysis of urban
resources.

Kent's academic and professional works were substantial. He wrote hundreds of reports and analyses for
clientele, which ranged geographically from cities in Texas to Mexico, China, The Netherlands, and beyond.
Similarly, he wrote hundreds of papers for symposia and conferences. Kent co-edited the student edition of
Planning and Urban Design Standards, a fundamental text for the planning profession. He spoke internationally
in Grenoble, France; Suzhou, China; Mexico City; Turin, Italy; Montreal, Canada; and Santo Domingo, Puerto
Rico. A considerable portion of his work was funded through grants totaling more than $2,714,000.

Kent Butler's crowning achievement was the creation of the Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge.
The Balcones Canyonlands Habitat Preservation Plan represented the first functional application of the Federal
Endangered Species Act to prohibit development of vacant urban real estate. Today, Kent's Balcones
Canyonlands accomplishment is the model throughout the United States for enlightened approaches to
protection of the urban and surrounding environment.

Words from former CRP faculty colleague, Professor Dowell Myers of the University of Southern California,
best sum up the meaning of Kent's life within the CRP program in the School of Architecture at The University
of Texas at Austin as well as to the wider academic and urban community:

Kent Butler is one of the unsung heroes of planning. I dare say that legions of planners, as
well as department chairs and deans from across the country, have shared my experience of
learning from Kent. Kent was an activist at bringing environmental science into the service of
planning. His specialty was water resources and he pursued a professional goal of
implementation, without which planning can have no success... His efforts and impacts were
profound...

That Kent's pervasive influence was accomplished with a quiet and unassuming manner, commensurate with
the best of humanitarian approaches today, resonates loudly as his legacy to the CRP program and the School of
Architecture.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Terry Kahn (chair),
Michael Oden, and Robert Paterson.

Distributed to the dean of the School of Architecture on September 29, 2011, and posted under "Memorials" at:
http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.