The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Gerre E. Hancock, associate professor, music, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
General Faculty and Faculty Council

IN MEMORIAM
GERRE E. HANCOCK

Dr. Gerre Hancock, Butler School of Music faculty member from 2004-12, was considered to be the finest organ improviser in America. Hancock and his wife, Judith, were appointed to the faculty at The University of Texas at Austin in 2004. Gerre and Judith re-established the Sacred Music program and have since built one of the strongest organ studios in the country. Gerre was an inspiring teacher, revered by all of his students. His generosity and positivism were apparent at every level of interaction with his students.

Prior to his appointment, Dr. Hancock held the position of organist and master of choristers at Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue in New York City where, for more than thirty years, he set a new standard for church music in America. Previous to his time at Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue, he held positions as organist and choirmaster of Christ Church Cathedral in Cincinnati where he also served on the artist faculty of the College-Conservatory of Music at the University of Cincinnati, and as assistant organist at St. Bartholomew’s Episcopal Church in New York City. Gerre was also a faculty member at the Juilliard School of Music from 1971-2004.

Gerre Edward Hancock was born in Lubbock, Tex., in 1934 (Buddy Holly was a boyhood friend of his younger brother), and he told The Journal in 2004 that he knew that he wanted to be a musician from the time he was a child. He described hearing a pipe organ for the first time, when he was about 6. ‘I recall that the music was—who else?—J.S. Bach, but that’s about it. Just the sheer beauty of the sounds, wind-blown, coming through those wooden and metal pipes, still thrills me more than I could ever articulate.’

Dr. Hancock received his Bachelor of Music degree from The University of Texas at Austin and his Master of Sacred Music degree from Union Theological Seminary in New York where he was awarded the Unitas Distinguished Alumnus Award. He was honored with a Rotary Foundation Fellowship and, while studying in Paris, was a finalist at the International Music Competition in Munich, Germany. His studied organ with E. William Doty, Robert Baker, Jean Langlais, Nadia Boulanger, and Marie-Claire Alain. He was drafted into the Army and served in Korea, toting a field organ with him on bivouac.

A fellow of the American Guild of Organists, Gerre Hancock was a member of its National Council and a founder and past president of the Association of Anglican Musicians. During this time, he also taught improvisation on a visiting basis at the Institute of Sacred Music at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut, and the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, New York. In 1981, he was appointed a fellow of the Royal School of Church Music and a fellow of the Royal College of Organists in 1995. Gerre received honorary Doctor of Music degrees from the Nashotah House Theological Seminary and the University of the South at Sewanee, Tennessee. In May 2004, he was awarded the Doctor of Divinity degree (honoris causa) from the General Theological Seminary in New York. He is listed in Who’s who in America, and his biography appears in the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 2nd edition. He was honored in a ceremony at Lambeth
Palace in London, where he was presented the Medal of the Cross of St. Augustine by the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Gerre Hancock’s consummate skill was clearly apparent in his concert appearances. Possessing a masterly interpretive ability, he was an artist of taste, warmth, perception, and style. He was a featured recitalist and lecturer at numerous regional conventions of the American Guild of Organists (AGO) and at national conventions of the Guild in Philadelphia, Cleveland, Boston, Detroit, Houston, New York City, and Washington, D.C. He also represented the AGO as recitalist at the Centenary Anniversary of the Royal College of Organists in London and gave numerous performances throughout the U.S., Europe, South Africa, and Japan. On occasion, he performed in duo recitals with his wife, Judith Hancock.

Compositions by Dr. Hancock are published by Oxford University Press. His compositions for organ and chorus are widely performed and his textbook, Improvising: How to Master the Art, is used by musicians all over the country. He has recorded for Gothic Records, Decca/Argo, Koch International, and Priory Records, both as a conductor of the Saint Thomas Church Fifth Avenue choir and as soloist.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Darlene C. Wiley (chair), A. David Renner, and Roger E. Myers.

Distributed to the dean of the School of Music on August 23, 2012, and posted under “Memorials” at http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.