DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL FACULTY

REPORT OF THE MEMORIAL RESOLUTION COMMITTEE FOR
PAUL A. JENSEN

The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Paul A. Jensen, professor emeritus, mechanical engineering, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM
PAUL A. JENSEN

With deep sorrow, we mourn the passing of our colleague, Paul A. Jensen, who died on April 4, 2011. Paul came to The University of Texas at Austin in 1967 as part of a group involved in transforming a traditional program in industrial engineering into one centered on operations research. The program Paul and his colleagues worked so diligently to develop was just recently approved to offer a Master of Science in Operations Research (OR).

Paul served on the UT Austin faculty for thirty-six years from 1967 to 2003. During this time, he advised twenty doctoral and fifty-seven master’s students and taught nineteen different courses, six at the undergraduate and thirteen at the graduate level. Aside from serving on dozens of UT Austin committees, he was graduate advisor and associate chair for the Department of Mechanical Engineering (ME). He contributed to the OR profession in many ways. He served in elected positions as a board member of the Operations Research Society of America and as Vice President for Meetings of the Institute for Operations Research and the Management Sciences (INFORMS). He served as the general chairman of the fall 1997 INFORMS meeting and was named an INFORMS Fellow in 2005. Then in 2007, Paul was honored as the recipient of the INFORMS Prize for the Teaching of Operations Research and Management Science Practice.

He was innovative in his teaching and pioneered instructional methods that are commonplace today. Paul rose through the academic ranks to become the Cullen Trust for Higher Education Endowed Professor in Engineering No. 3. He received an Outstanding Graduate Teaching Award from UT Austin’s graduate school in 1991 and won first prize from The University of Texas at Austin Innovative Instructional Technology Awards Program in 2006.

Among his many publications are several books that have had a tremendous impact on the field of OR. His first major book, Network Flow Programming (1980), which was coauthored with J. Wesley Barnes, covered the field of single commodity network flow models and algorithms. This text won the Book of the Year Award from the Institute of Industrial Engineers and was translated into Russian. In the dawning age of microcomputers, Paul published the first compendium of OR computer programs, specifically adapted for microcomputers, Microsolve/Operations Research (1983). The Student’s Guide to Operations Research (1986) presented a survey of OR, noted for its easy readability. His book, Operations Research Models and Methods (2003), coauthored with Jonathan Bard, is unique in its balance between modeling and methodological aspects of OR. All these books reach out to students and practitioners through their emphasis on modeling and by providing easy availability of solution algorithms.

Perhaps Paul’s most lasting memorial is the innovative website (www.ormm.net) he built with artwork by Nathan, one of his sons. The site was originally created to support the text Operations Research Models and Methods, but it has grown in content much beyond the text. The site is remarkably effective in supporting the goals of OR education and practice and describes models for an enormous variety of OR problems. It provides over thirty add-ins for Microsoft® Excel that implement OR methods. Not only does it teach various techniques in OR, probability, and applied statistics, but it also presents tutorials, sample problems, and a fully functional program written in Visual Basic in Excel. The testimonials page of the site lists hundreds of comments from
students and practitioners attesting to the usefulness of the site and the add-ins. Paul gave a keynote address on his add-ins to a packed room at the November 2010 INFORMS national meeting in Austin. He last updated his site on March 16, 2011. The website remains open to the public, and its contents are free. At the time of his death, the website had received over a quarter of a million visits.

The caliber and quality of the website Paul developed to provide instructional material for those teaching OR and industrial engineering inspired the mechanical engineering (ME) department to ask him in early 2005 to undertake a full revision of the undergraduate course, Engineering Economic Analysis. Although just retired, Paul relished the challenge and jumped into the project with the enthusiasm of a new faculty member. Because he had taught the course in the traditional manner for thirty years, he understood what worked and what the potential was for engaging the students in a more interconnected way. Rather than digitizing his notes and problem sets, he set out to develop a comprehensive online course using a variety of media, including videos, Excel add-ins, interactive quizzes, embedded calculators, and flash presentations. What emerged was a completely new course, renamed Engineering Finance, along with a website (http://www.me.utexas.edu/~me353/) to house the materials. In the spring of 2006, he taught the first version of the course to one hundred and twenty students with the help of teaching assistants who ran weekly discussion sections. The response was overwhelmingly positive. This motivated the ME department to adopt the format for ME 353 and to encourage other faculty members to use a similar format in their courses. In keeping with Paul's abiding belief in open-source software and the importance of teaching innovation, all material is available on the web free of charge and will remain so for the foreseeable future.

In addition to his outstanding professional contributions to the development of OR as a field of study and his innovative and effective teaching style, Paul Jensen had a positive impact on a large number of people. The genuine appreciation, warmth, and personal sense of loss that his colleagues and students felt is evident in the statements posted on the departmental website after his death, included at the end of this memorial tribute.

Paul Jensen’s ability to connect with people may have come from his Midwestern roots. He was born in Chicago, Illinois, to Allen and Eleanor Jensen on August 27, 1936. He graduated from the University of Illinois with a B.S. degree and the University of Pittsburgh with an M.S. degree, both in electrical engineering. He worked for Westinghouse Electric Corporation before earning a Ph.D. in Operations Research and Industrial Engineering (ORIE) from Johns Hopkins University in 1967. Paul was a devoted family man and will join his parents as he leaves his brothers, Dave and Jim, and his sister, Marie. He also leaves behind his wife, Margaret, and their four children, Allen with wife Jenny, Nathan with wife Cassandra, Deborah with husband John Carver, and Ruth with husband Jason Gray. There are nine beautiful grandchildren, Ashley, Joshua, Ben, Mason, Tristan, Justin, Zachary, Zoe, and Julia. In addition to his loving family, Paul’s legacy includes many colleagues and former students to whom he was an inspirational teacher, mentor, colleague, and friend. The remembrances that follow below attest to the positive impact Paul had on both the professional and personal development and enthusiasm of those who were fortunate to encounter him during his life’s journey.

Remembrances from Colleagues in Operations Research:

Paul was a kind and gentle teacher who helped me get off to a good start here in ORIE. He will be missed.
-Eric Bickel

Paul Jensen’s contributions in operations research and the management sciences (OR/MS) through his research, education, and service are well known and well documented. I prefer to share a somewhat more personal account of his contributions.

I first met Paul in the fall of 1994 at an ORSA/TIMS meeting in Detroit. I was a recently graduated Ph.D. student searching for a faculty position. Paul attended the talk I gave at that meeting in Detroit. After joining the faculty at The University of Texas at Austin the following fall and working with Paul as a colleague over the next decade, I learned that his sharp and insightful questions following my talk were standard form for him.

In my first semester at The University of Texas at Austin, Paul was scheduled to teach the Linear Programming course to incoming M.S. and Ph.D. students, but he gave the course to me, and he instead taught another. He knew that my teaching this particular course would
help launch my academic career. Paul's gesture was selfless and fully representative of his nature and of the way in which he has conducted his professional career.

I first learned of operations research when I was an undergraduate student majoring in physics and mathematics. My small liberal arts college didn't have courses in OR, but I bought Hillier and Lieberman's Introduction to Operations Research. And I bought The Student's Guide to Operations Research Paul had written to accompany the Hillier and Lieberman textbook. I devoured both texts, and, in this way, Paul helped launch my career in OR more than a decade before I met him. I know from a number of other colleagues that I am not alone in this regard.

Paul devoted an enormous effort to developing user-friendly Excel add-ins that span much of OR/MS, and he distributed these freely via his website. Today, for many undergraduates and other newcomers to OR, these add-ins play much the same role that his Student's Guide textbook did for me more than two decades ago. The graduate program in ORIE will ensure that Paul's add-ins will continue to be available for free.

Paul was a dear friend and a wonderful colleague. I will miss him greatly.

-Dave Morton

Paul Jensen was an outstanding friend, professor, and colleague. He set a standard that all of us should strive to emulate. I have many fond memories of Paul and his family, reaching back to 1967 when, as an M.Eng. student, I helped him move into his first office at the university.

-Wes Barnes

Although Paul had many great characteristics worthy of emulation, I will remember him most fondly for two things: a sharp mind and a sharp wit.

Paul always asked the most insightful and incisive questions, especially during seminars. As a young faculty candidate interviewing at The University of Texas at Austin, I still remember his questions after my seminar as the most probing of any I received during my whole job search. Paul continued to attend OR seminars after his retirement, and he retained his characteristic insight.

I also always thought of Paul as the "youngest" ORIE faculty member. Much of his youthful attitude was manifested in his humor, which ranged from the sophisticated to the refreshingly ribald. Paul, being about 25 years older than me, was always someone I wanted to be like 25 years from now.

Finally, I'll remember Paul as a "founding father" and the heart of ORIE at The University of Texas at Austin, in addition to being a great colleague and friend.

-John Hasenbein

I have known Paul for 16 years, since the beginning of my career here at The University of Texas at Austin. He was the best friend to have during difficult times and the toughest judge of one's professional work—a combination of passion and skills that I have never seen before. He was the soul of our operations research group. I will miss sitting next to him during the Friday seminars and laughing at his witty jokes at lunch. I will miss discussing with him the latest add-ins he has coded or the latest biography book he has read. He will be forever in my heart.

-Elmira Popova

Paul was an inspiration to all who met him. He was the first person I got to know when I arrived at The University of Texas 26 years ago. Through the years, I spent many wonderful holidays with him and his family. We became especially close when we began to collaborate on an introductory book in operations research. After many long nights and weekends, it was finally published in 2003. I have to concede that he did a majority of the work on the text and just about all of the work on the accompanying website. We were fortunate in that the book won the Hamilton Award at UT and were planning to revise it next year.

I am most appreciative for Paul's efforts to revise our undergraduate course, Engineering Finance. Although retired, he couldn't stay away from the university and spent most of 2005 creating online lectures, exercises, and Excel add-ins for the course, which I now teach. The
website that is available to all is a fitting tribute to his creativity, his devotion to his students, his technical skills, and his indomitable energy. He was a friend, a colleague, and a mentor whom I will never forget.

-Jonathan Bard

Notes from Former Students:

Paul Jensen was truly one of the kindest and gentlest souls I've ever had the pleasure of meeting. While I never had the chance to work directly with him or take a class from him, I had many interactions with him during my five years in UT's ORIE master's and Ph.D. programs. In 2005, I attended a summer class on stochastic programming, which he was auditing, and his impressive intellect, extensive experience, and bright personality made the class all the more wonderful and interesting. I have been an avid user of his Operations Research Models and Methods textbook and Excel add-ins, both in my academic and professional life. Paul's legacy will continue to live on in the hearts of those who knew him and in the numerous contributions he made to the field of operations research during his long and fruitful career.

My thoughts and prayers go out to the Jensen family during this difficult time.

-Dennis P. Michalopoulos, Ph.D., TidalTV

As we all miss Dr. Jensen, I have a story I'd like to share. One of my favorite memories from his Network Flow class (2001): The answer to a problem was 42. He asked the class, "What is 42?" Some eager classmate repeated the question. Dr. Jensen said, "No, what is 42?" I replied, "It is life, the universe, and everything," in an obvious reference to The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Universe. He said that was the right answer and moved on to a discussion of the next problem. It was so great to see his understated humor.

Thanks for coordinating his memorial.

-Assistant Professor Karthik Ramachandran, Cox School of Business SMU

I am really sad to hear about this. He was a very humble and incredibly nice person. And it is also very shocking because I saw him at the last INFORMS conference, and he was very well. I will always remember him as a professor with great enthusiasm for teaching and love for OR.

-Assistant Professor Sinan Erzurumlu, Babson College, MA

I attended Texas as an undergrad, and Professor Jensen was my instructor for Engineering Finance and Operations Engineering. I graduated in 1997. Professor Jensen was a nice man. He was always approachable when you needed a question answered and always made time available. Whenever I visited the campus, I would always look up four people. Dr. Jensen, Dr. Ezekoye, Dr. Ball, and Dr. Matthews. They certainly helped shape my undergraduate experience, as I had two classes with each of them. I feel fortunate to have had them as instructors.

I live in Alexandria, Virginia, now and attended law school at The Catholic University of America in Washington, DC. I currently work at the United States Patent and Trademark Office.

-Paul Durand, U.S. Patent Attorney

Thoughts and prayers for his family. Wonderful man and brilliant instructor. He will be missed in the OR world!

-Kyle Jones

I am very saddened to hear the loss of Dr. Jensen. He was a great teacher and always available to help struggling students in time of need. He will be greatly missed. I'd studied in his class, and he was also on my Ph.D. committee when I was at UT.

-Anukal Chiralaksanakul, Bangkok, Thailand
Prof. Jensen was a great teacher who always emphasized that all the complicated theoretical ideas must have a meaningful practical application to be a worthwhile research topic. He was very kind and helpful to all students, including myself, making my time in the ORIE program a pleasant and enriching one. I will miss him tremendously.

-Siwate Rojanasoonthon, Siam Commercial Bank PCL, Bangkok, Thailand

I am deeply distressed by the news that Dr. Jensen left us. What could be more disheartening than that I could not get the news on time to arrange a flight to Austin to attend his funeral? I always felt so close to Dr. Jensen, and I was not ready to lose him yet. He was truly one of the greatest persons I have known in my whole life. I feel fortunate to have worked with Dr. Jensen so closely, and no other student during my time at UT Austin had that kind of opportunity. We taught ME-353 in the fall of 2005, making extensive use of his website, and I remember he would put in great efforts, with so much enthusiasm, to make sure that every bit of knowledge he had was recorded on DVDs and was available on his website. Dr. Jensen and I developed a lot of online teaching materials, and I occasionally taught the class. In this process, I learned so much about engineering finance that, to this day, I continue to make use of that knowledge. My wife and I used the factor calculator on his website a lot when we bought our first home; much to the bankers' surprise, we always had our numbers ready. I take consolation in the fact that Dr. Jensen will continue to live forever through his favorite website full of Excel add-ins and Flash utilities.

-Vishv Jeet

I worked in the M.E. department from 1979 to 2004 and knew Dr. Jensen well. He loved to bump me with his wheelchair, and I always told people he tried to run me down. He would look so innocent and just smile and laugh. I'm glad I had the opportunity to work with him. He will be missed.

-Kathy Worley

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Jonathan Bard, J. Wesley Barnes and Professor Emeritus William G. Lesso.

Distributed to the dean of the School of Engineering on June 24, 2011, and posted under “Memorials” at: http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.