The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Irwin Chester Lieb, vice president and dean, graduate studies, has filed with the Secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

John R. Durbin, Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM
IRWIN CHESTER LIEB

In memorializing Irwin “Chet” Lieb, one commemorates a life that, while relatively brief, was rich. He served his country as a navy fighter pilot; he served a number of universities as a professor and administrator; and he served his profession as a dedicated teacher and productive scholar.

Irwin Chester Lieb was born in Newark, New Jersey, November 9, 1925, and died in Pasadena, California, May 23, 1992. After beginning his university studies at MIT, he left school to become a naval aviator. Returning to his studies after his military service, Lieb earned a BA from Princeton in 1947, an MA from Cornell in 1949, and a PhD from Yale in 1953. At Yale he studied with John Smith and Paul Weiss. In the course of his student career, Lieb received the McCosh Prize in metaphysics from Princeton, a Morse Fellowship at Yale, and a postdoctoral fellowship from the American Council of Learned Societies.

Lieb taught at Yale from 1952 to 1959, as an instructor and assistant professor, and at Connecticut College, where he was professor and department chairman in the years 1959-1963. He left Connecticut to join the philosophy department at The University of Texas at Austin in 1963. From 1968 to 1972 he was chairman of the department. In 1973, he became associate dean of the Graduate School, and from 1975 to 1979 he was vice-president and dean of graduate studies. In 1981, Lieb left the University to become provost and vice-president, as well as University Professor of Philosophy, at the University of Southern California. During his 18 years at UT Austin, Lieb directed 21 PhD dissertations. In 1971 he was elected president of the Southwestern Philosophical Society.

Lieb’s early studies focused on the philosophy of Charles S. Peirce. His early publications included several articles on Peirce’s philosophy and a collection of Peirce’s letters, Charles S. Peirce’s Letters to Lady Welby, 1953, that he edited. He continued to work on Peirce’s philosophy, and his later publications include a paper on basic concepts in Peirce’s philosophy. In 1961, Lieb edited and contributed an essay to Experience, Existence and the Good: Essays in Honor of Paul Weiss. In addition to numerous philosophical articles, he published two books: The Four Faces of Man: A Philosophical Study of Practice, Reason, Art, and Religion, 1971, and Past, Present and Future: A Philosophical Essay about Time, 1991. The latter book was a highly-acclaimed work on one of the most difficult philosophical issues—the problem of “time,” a topic on which Lieb had published several papers. One commentator referred to the book as a “classic” and another compared it to Alfred N. Whitehead’s Process and Reality. Lieb was working on two other books, Our Uncertain Universities and Time and Value, at the time of his death.

Lieb’s essay “The Ontological Status of the Laws of Nature,” Review of Metaphysics, vol. 39, 1985, was an attempt to provide an analysis of the concept of causality and set out a version of an anti-Humean realistic analysis of causal connections. That type of view is currently a widely discussed philosophical topic. His work in metaphysics and ontology led Lieb to raise issues about the connection between logic and ontology in papers such as “Logic and Reality” and “Logical Constants,” both published in the Review of Metaphysics. Like his teacher Paul Weiss, a well-known figure on the American scene for many years, Lieb’s work focused on fundamental and classical metaphysical issues—time, substance, causation—as well as on various areas in value theory, especially on problems about the nature of man and society. His work in the history of philosophy centered on the pragmatism of Peirce and the process philosophy of Alfred N. Whitehead. Continuing to work during his terminal illness, he finished a final paper on Peirce’s philosophy shortly before his death.
During his four years as vice president and dean of graduate studies, Lieb initiated two important awards—one in 1976 for outstanding graduate teaching and one in 1978 for outstanding dissertations. In cooperation with the Graduate School of Business, Lieb helped implement “Careers in Business,” in which recent PhD’s or those nearing their degrees in the humanities or behavioral sciences took an intensive summer course in five areas of business. This effort preceded by 15 years the present concern about preparation of doctoral students for nonacademic careers.

Lieb’s attention to faculty and graduate students’ needs was reflected in his work in 1978 on newly-designed and edited handbooks for faculty and teaching assistants, which were based on University and UT System regulations. Lieb also oversaw the internal review of UT doctoral programs, mandated by the Graduate Assembly in 1973. Later, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board began a review of all doctoral programs in the state using a format based on the University’s internal review.

An active participant in the Association of Graduate Schools of the Association of American Universities, Lieb served as a member-at-large and brought the association to Austin for its 1978 meeting. In that year, he was appointed to the National Commission on Research, an organization established to examine the relationships between government agencies and universities involved in research. Lieb was one of the principal authors of the five volumes produced by the commission on such topics as accountability, review processes, and research personnel.

Lieb’s efforts to bring distinguished Jewish scientists from the then Soviet Union to teach in the United States brought him international recognition. In February of 1983, he traveled to the Soviet Union as a member of a two-man delegation to hand deliver invitations from the University of Southern California for one-year visiting appointments to seven eminent dissident Soviet scholars.

A fund, established in Lieb’s name, currently provides for an undergraduate scholarship in philosophy at the University of Texas at Austin. His books have been given to the Brogan Reading Room in the Department of Philosophy.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Herbert I. Hochberg (chair), Edwin B. Allaire, Alexander Mourelatos, and retired Assistant Dean of Graduate Studies Audrey N. Slate.

Distributed to the Office of the Vice President and Dean of Graduate Studies, the Executive Vice President and Provost, and the President on November 19, 2001. Copies are available on request from the Office of the General Faculty, FAC 22, F9500. This resolution is posted under “Memorials” at www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.