



# CSU Bakersfield

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## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** August 12, 2013

**TO:** The Campus Community

**FROM:** Horace Mitchell *dm*  
President

**SUBJECT:** The Passing of Dr. Michael Flachmann

Thou know'st 'tis common; all that lives must die,  
Passing through nature to eternity.

-- *Hamlet*, Act I, scene 2, line 72

We mourn today the sudden passing of our friend and colleague, distinguished professor Dr. Michael Flachmann, Professor of English, Shakespearean scholar, author, and Director of the University Honors program. While away at the annual Utah Shakespeare Festival in Cedar City, Michael suffered a heart attack caused by blood clots in his legs. He passed away Thursday evening, August 8, 2013, at the age of 70.

To encapsulate Michael's work within a memorandum's confines is to tell only the short story of the breadth and depth of his love for teaching and learning. His professional career at CSUB spanned more than four decades. His accomplishments and accolades are legion, his contributions and influence far-reaching. He was an early and longstanding CSUB faculty member, arriving in 1972 just two years after the campus opened for classes. Michael earned his bachelor's degree from the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, his master's from the University of Virginia, and his doctorate from the University of Chicago in 1972. His joy and passion for teaching were evident in his classrooms where he blended theater and literature to rapt students of Shakespeare, Renaissance Literature, and Medieval and Renaissance Drama.

Michael's teaching excellence was recognized at the local, state, and national levels. In 2000, he received the CSUB Outstanding Professor Award and the Faculty Research Award, and the Leadership and Service Award in 2002. He was named the CSU Outstanding Professor in 1993. In 1999 received the CSU's prestigious Wang Family Award. Characteristically, he donated half of the honorarium to scholarships to benefit honors students. The Carnegie Foundation named him U.S. Professor of the Year in 1995.

He wrote and published profusely, authoring more than twenty books and 100 articles. Among his most recent books are *Nexus: A Rhetorical Reader for Writers* (2012);

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*Shakespeare in Performance: Inside the Creative Process* (2011); *Blood Royal: Shakespeare's Henry VI Trilogy* (2011); and *Shakespeare from Page to Stage: An Anthology of the Most Popular Plays and Sonnets* (2006). He co-authored with his wife, Dr. Kim Flachmann, also a CSUB faculty member, *The Prose Reader: Essays for Thinking, Reading, and Writing* (tenth edition, 2012). His articles were published in such journals as *Studies in English Literature* and the *Shakespeare Quarterly*.

Michael served as a dramaturge for more than 100 professional Shakespeare theater productions for prominent Tony Award-winning theaters, including the La Jolla Playhouse, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, and the Utah Shakespeare Festival, where he had just finished moderating a symposium when he fell ill. He created camps for non-professionals: Camp Shakespeare; Mini Camp Shakespeare; and Camp Shakespeare for Seniors, and advised on local Kern County theater productions.

Michael's theatrical creativity knew no limits. They extended to the President's fall faculty receptions to which he would arrive in full costume commensurate with the year's theme. Two of the most memorable costumes were for the New Orleans-themed faculty reception for which he came dressed as a lobster, and the Country/Western theme for which he dressed as a cow, complete with udders. He was an avid tennis player, a fifth-degree black belt in judo, and taught classes in both. He could pen lyrics to commemorate any occasion. He coined the phrase, "CSUB: An Ivy League Education at a CSU Price."

In addition to his scholarship and teaching, Michael also was fully engaged in service to the University, our students, and the community. His name is synonymous with the University Honors program which he created and oversaw from its inception 1980. He was the driving force behind the cultivation of a \$1 million gift to support the program from the late Helen Hawk Windes. He was tireless in his recruitment of the top students in the region and engaging students with faculty. He was an advisor for Freshman Day and Transfer Day student orientations and registration. A loyal supporter of CSUB athletics, he endowed and presented annually the Flachmann Award to the best male and female student-athlete of the year. His activities "Are You Smarter than a CSUB Honors Student?" and the judo club demonstrations have become staples at our annual open house, Celebrate CSUB! He played a significant role in our University strategic planning process and the University's reaffirmation of accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

We extend our deepest condolences to Michael's wife, Dr. Kim Flachmann, their son Christopher and daughter Laura, and grandsons Carter and Bennett. A memorial service will be held Saturday at Hillcrest Memorial Park and Mortuary, 9101 Kern Canyon Road, 93306, (661) 366-5766. We will provide details as soon as we receive them.

In Michael's honor, the CSUB flag will fly at half-staff Thursday-Saturday, August 15-17<sup>th</sup>.

He gave his honours to the world again,  
His blessed part to heaven, and slept in peace.

-- *Henry VIII* (1613), Act IV, scene 2, line 29.