In Memoriam: Provost Emeritus Paul Sypherd

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Paul S. Sypherd, a University of Arizona alumnus who served as provost and interim president, died Jan. 18. He was 83.

Sypherd, who earned a master’s degree in microbiology from the University in 1960, returned in 1993 when he was appointed executive vice president and provost. He remained in that role for more than seven years, also serving briefly as interim president during the 1996 academic year.

Sypherd led several major efforts during his time as provost, including the development of the $20 million underground Manuel Pacheco Integrated Learning Center [1], which was designed to enhance the first-year undergraduate experience. Sypherd also oversaw a study group that ultimately led to a campuswide core curriculum for general education and oversaw the establishment of a system of shared governance at the University.

One of Sypherd’s contributions had a significant effect on all University employees: the yearly closure of campus between Dec. 24 and Jan. 1.

After stepping down as provost, Sypherd continued to teach undergraduate seminars until his retirement in 2002.

Sypherd was an internationally recognized researcher in microbiology. He and his students published more than 150 articles in peer-reviewed scientific journals over the course of his 35-year research career. Sypherd also served on committees at the National Institutes of Health, was editor of the Journal of Bacteriology and was founding editor of the journal Molecular and Cellular Biology.

During his time in Tucson, Sypherd served the community as a board member for the YMCA, Arizona Theatre Company and the Carondelet Foundation.

Sypherd is survived by his wife, Linda; his daughter, Denise; and sons David, Sean and Scott. A celebration of Sypherd’s life is scheduled for March 21 from 1-3 p.m. at the Stevie Eller Dance Theatre [2].

Gifts in Sypherd’s memory can be made to the Alzheimer’s Foundation of America [3].

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[1] https://oia.arizona.edu/ilc