

In Memoriam: Robert Lusch

University Communications
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Professor **Robert Lusch**, who recently retired from the UA Eller College of Management, died Thursday after a long battle with cancer. He was 69.

Lusch joined the UA as head of the Department of Marketing in the Eller College in 2004. He held that position until 2010, when he was named executive director of the McGuire Center for Entrepreneurship at Eller. He served in that role until 2015.

Before coming to the UA, he had served as dean of two business colleges, at the University of Oklahoma and Texas Christian University.

Lusch's teaching interests included complex adaptive systems, marketing channels, retailing and innovation in society. He published almost 160 articles, which were placed in top-tier and specialty journals on topics ranging from marketing institutions and planning to consumer behavior and retailing.

Among his many other accomplishments, he co-authored "Retailing," which is the most widely used textbook in the field of retailing.

Lusch was "the elder statesman" of the marketing department, said **Mrinal Ghosh**, who now heads the department.

"His passion toward his students, his faculty and his field was unwavering and continued to the last day of his life. He was also a very caring man and a loving friend and mentor who rejoiced in the achievements of everybody," he said.

Ghosh and other colleagues noted Lusch's gift for visionary and strategic thinking.

"He was remarkably unique in the sense that whatever he did ? his own research, providing advice to young scholars and doctoral students on their own work, moving the department, the marketing discipline, or the Eller College forward ? he always had an uncanny, long-run strategic vision on what it meant or how it could be accomplished," Ghosh said.

"He was extraordinarily creative, simultaneously able to identify fundamental concepts and connections that were not readily apparent, then demonstrate their application in the real world," said **Keith Joiner**, UA professor of medicine, cellular and molecular medicine, public health, and economics. "I was truly honored to work with him in applying his seminal concept of service-dominant logic to health care. It was almost comical how often he would come up with a fresh idea or term that captured the essence of some issue we were struggling to understand."

His ability to synthesize ideas wasn't limited to his discipline, a former colleague said.

"I had the good fortune to work with Bob on a number of creative projects at the Eller College," said **Liz Warren-Pederson**, assistant vice president for marketing and communications at the UA Foundation, who worked with Lusch when she was the college's director of marketing and communications. "I've heard his faculty colleagues explain his unique gift of seeing how the project at hand fit into a bigger picture or even an ecosystem, and he brought that same perspective to design and architectural challenges. He was a thoughtful and strategic collaborator, a generous intellect, and a good-humored guy who could also rock a pair of cowboy boots."

David Schmitz, director of the UA Center for the Philosophy of Freedom, recalled weekends when he and his wife were guests at a ranch owned by Lusch and his wife.

When the two men found themselves alone, "we would talk about the next big idea in our respective fields, or we would sit on the patio just being grateful for the silence," Schmitz said. "Bob knew that life is short. He didn't have time to be in a hurry. A lot of people will remember that Bob Lusch was a giant. A lot of people will remember that he was a friend.?"

Lusch retired from the UA earlier this year. At his retirement ceremony, it was announced that a Lusch Endowed Initiative had been established in his honor. The funds will support Eller College of Management marketing students, faculty and research.

Lusch is survived by his wife, Virginia, his daughter, Heather, and his twin sons, Stephen and Mark.

Friends will be invited to share stories about Lusch during a viewing and rosary on Thursday from 6-8 p.m. at Adair Funeral Home, Dodge Chapel, 1050 N. Dodge Blvd. A service will be held on Friday at 10 a.m. at Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church, 1300 N. Greasewood Road. followed by a graveside service at Holy Hope Cemetery, 3555 N. Oracle Road.

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