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Vanderbilt political scientist Neal Tate passes away



NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Neal Tate, a professor and chair of Vanderbilt University's Department of Political Science who provided strong leadership during a successful rebuilding of the department, died on Sept. 13, 2009. Tate, 65, had been recovering from major surgery.

Tate, who was recruited to Vanderbilt from the University of North Texas in 2003, was widely admired by his academic colleagues for not only his stature as a scholar but also his administrative and interpersonal skills. During his time at Vanderbilt, the department's reputation soared as it steadily added esteemed faculty to its ranks. Tate also held an appointment at Vanderbilt Law School.

"Neal Tate was a valued friend, an accomplished scholar and a leader of his department, the university and the discipline of political science," said Carolyn Dever, dean of the College of Arts and Science and professor of English. "We will reap the benefits of his great work for many years to come."

Tate, who was born in Gastonia, N.C., received his bachelor's degree from Wake Forest University, where he graduated cum laude in 1965. He then went to Tulane University to earn his master's degree and doctorate.

Tate began teaching at the University of North Texas in 1970 and eventually became dean of the Robert B. Toulouse School of Graduate Studies and Regents Professor of Political Science before coming to Vanderbilt. He did extensive research on comparative and American judicial politics. Other areas of academic specialization were Third World politics and the military in politics.

Bruce Oppenheimer, professor of political science and acting department chair, said that Tate was simply a first-rate person and friend who demonstrated great leadership. "Neal contributed a huge investment of his time and effort the past six years to guide our department. For example, the number of political science faculty increased by two-thirds under his watch."

In 1994 Tate was a Fulbright-Hays Senior Research Fellow at Ateneo de Manila University's College of Law in the Philippines. He also served from 1994 to 1996 as

director of the Law and Social Science Program at the National Science Foundation while on leave from the University of North Texas.

Tate served as editor of *The Law and Politics Book Review*, published by The Law and Courts Section of the American Political Science Association, from 1996 to 1999. In 2005 he was editor-in-chief for *Governments of the World: A Global Guide to Citizens' Rights and Responsibilities*.

He was a co-author of "Deepening Our Understanding of U.S. Foreign Assistance on Democracy Building Final Report," prepared for the United States Agency for International Development in 2008. Another article that he co-authored, "Is the Law a Mere Parchment Barrier to Human Rights Abuse?" was published in the April 2009 issue of the *Journal of Politics*.

At the time of his death, he was working on a book project titled *Political Repression, Human Rights and the Rule of Law: The Global Picture, 1976-2005*.

Tate was serving as 2009-2010 president of the Southern Political Science Association.

Last spring Tate was awarded the Alexander Heard Distinguished Service Professor Award, given annually to a Vanderbilt faculty member for distinctive contributions to the understanding of problems of contemporary society.

Tate is survived by his mother, Pearl Tate of Gastonia, N.C.; wife, Carol Tate of Nashville; daughter, Dr. Erin Tate, and son-in-law, Scott Fisher of Dallas, Texas; three brothers and their wives, Michael and Barbara Tate of Gastonia, Donald and Susan Tate of Mount Pleasant, S.C., Richard and Kathryn Tate of Fulshear, Texas; and several nieces and nephews.

Arrangements are being handled by Marshall Donnelly-Combs. A memorial service was held in Benton Chapel on Friday, September 18, on the Vanderbilt campus.

Memorials may be given in his name to Vanderbilt University Department of Political Science, VU Station B #351817, Nashville, TN 37235-1817; the University of North Texas Department of Political Science, 1155 Union Circle #305340, Denton, TX 76203-5017; or Brookmeade Congregational Church of the United Church of Christ, 700 Bresslyn Road, Nashville, TN 37205.

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