



Karen R. Hitchcock Ph.D.

February 10, 1943 - July 10, 2019

Rexford-Karen R. Hitchcock passed away after a long illness on July 10, 2019, at her home in Rexford, NY. Born in Williston Park, NY, on February 10, 1943, she was predeceased by her parents, Roy Clinton Hitchcock and Ruth Wardell Hitchcock, and by her husband, Murray Reid Blair, Jr.

All those who knew Karen will uniformly attest to the quality of her mind and life and to the joy and opportunity for intellectual and personal advancement that she brought to many persons through her commitment to higher education and the arts. She received her B.S. degree in Biology from St. Lawrence University, and her Ph.D. in Anatomy from the University of Rochester School of Medicine and Dentistry; as a post-doctoral fellow she conducted research into pulmonary Cell Biology at The Webb-Waring Institute for Medical Research at the University of Colorado Health Sciences Center. Between 1970 and 1985, Karen advanced through the academic ranks, producing a substantial body of research and original scholarship in the areas of Anatomy and Cellular Biology at the Tufts University School of Medicine in Boston, MA, where from 1982 to 1985 she held the George A. Bates Professorship in Histology and served as the Chairperson of the Department of Anatomy and Cellular Biology at the Tufts University Schools of Medicine, Dental Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, and the Sackler Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences in Boston. Leaving Tufts in 1985, Karen assumed academic and administrative posts at the Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center in Lubbock, TX, where between 1985 and 1987 she taught in the School of Medicine and also served as Associate Dean for Basic Sciences, Research and Graduate Studies, and as the Interim Director of the Tarbox Parkinson's Disease Institute. From 1987 to 1991, she served as Vice Chancellor for Research, Dean of the Graduate College, and Professor of Biological Sciences at the University of Illinois at Chicago, in Chicago, IL.

In 1991, Karen made a move that would impact the Capital District landscape and enlarge the educational and research missions of the University at Albany for the better part of the next three decades. Accepting appointment as the University's Vice President for Academic Affairs and Professor of Biological Sciences, she brought to fruition the

formation of the University's College of Arts and Sciences; oversaw the University's Sesquicentennial celebration; implemented a substantial revision of the campus's General Education Program; developed an enrollment management plan across all academic units; created a "Presidential Scholars" program at the undergraduate level and founded the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. When University President H. Patrick Swygert accepted the presidency of Howard University in 1995, Karen was named Interim President of the University at Albany; after a national search, she emerged as the choice for permanent President, the first woman to hold that position in the history of the University.

Under Karen's leadership from 1996 to 2003, the University reimagined the possibilities of its educational mission among networks associated with its growing cadre of regional, state, national, and global partners. Recruitment and retention of students added to Albany's reputation as hosting an increasingly diverse student body, while also enhancing its high academic profile. Successful educational initiatives such as "Project Renaissance" added to the University's reputation and attracted steadily increasing numbers of applicants to its undergraduate programs; at the same time, Karen's spearheading of programs in Nano-technology and health-related programs expanded not only the University's reputation for excellence but, literally, also its footprint.

During the early years of her presidency, Empire Commons was built, Division I athletic programs implemented, and the New York Giants made UAlbany their summer training camp for over ten years. On campus, a new Life Sciences Building and an Art/Sculpture facility improved opportunities for merging research with classroom instruction across a variety of disciplines. Finally, the University's "East Campus" in Rensselaer—now known as the Health Sciences Campus—in conjunction with the state's support for a Center of Excellence in Cancer Genomics and the addition of a campus devoted to the School of Public Health and health-related research and academic programs, led to substantive advancements in biotechnology and biomedical sciences.

Karen's departure from the presidency of the University at Albany in 2004 left many in the Capital District feeling the loss of not only an education and community leader, but also of a friend within the larger Capital District community.

In her last foray into academic administration, Karen accepted the post of Principal (the Canadian equivalent of President in academic settings) and Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University, one of Canada's most prominent universities, in Kingston, Ontario, where she remained until 2008.

After stepping down from that position, Karen and Murray returned to the Capital District

and settled permanently in Rexford. Neither she nor Murray ever used the word “retired”; rather, their Rexford home became a gathering place for old friends and new, especially as Karen returned to service on the boards of civic and educational organizations, including Albany Pro Musica, WMHT, and the Doane Stuart School. She co-hosted the very popular “Best of Our Knowledge” national public radio program on WAMC for eight years, and she was a founding co-Chair of the Business-Higher education Roundtable and the Chair of the Albany-Colonie Chamber of Commerce and the Center for Economic Growth. In 2018, Karen R. Hitchcock was the recipient of the University at Albany Foundation’s prestigious Academic Laureate Award.

Karen is survived by her brothers Roy Jr. (Judy) of Washburn, WI, and Garrett (Patricia) of Greencastle, Ireland; five nieces and nephews, Wendy, Sharon, Sandi, Cristin and Todd; nine grand nieces and nephews, Cassie, Lindsey, Ryan and Mathew, Mitchell, Jacob, Eric, Matthew and Kailey; and, two great-grand nieces, Hailey and Rebecca. She is also survived by cousins Jean, Bruce and John Wardell, Brenda (Hitchcock) Souza, and Edward and Ryer Hitchcock.

The family will be receiving guests at McVeigh Funeral Home on North Allen Street in Albany on 15 July from 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm.

The funeral service will be held at the Christ Community Reformed Church, at 1010 Route 146, Clifton Park, NY at 11:00AM on 16 July.

To leave a message for the family, please visit www.McveighFuneralHome.com

Those who wish to honor Karen may send a gift in her name to Karen Hitchcock New Frontiers Fund for IFW or Gift in honor of Karen Albany ProMusica.

Events

JUL **Visitation** 04:00PM - 07:00PM

15

McVeigh Funeral Home, Inc.
208 N Allen St, Albany, NY, US, 12206

JUL **Service** 11:00AM

16

Christ Community Reformed Church
1010 Rt 146, Clifton Park, NY, US

Comments



“ I worked with Karen at the University of Illinois at Chicago. I remember Karen's laughter and caring spirit. She was a natural leader and I had the opportunity to learn from her. While I have not seen her in many years, she will always have a place in my heart.

My condolences to her friends and family.

May her memory be a blessing.

Amy Levant

Amy Levant - July 16, 2019 at 09:38 PM



“ To the family of Karen R. Hitchcock:

Unable to meet you personally this afternoon, I appreciate this opportunity to express my own personal loss with Karen's passing. For many years when I directed the Corporate and Foundation Relations Office at UAlbany, our offices were close by so our paths literally crossed on a regular basis. Karen was always my anchor to windward, and I deeply appreciated her strong but kind ways of working together. For several years I also chaired the Initiatives for Women program and was terribly grateful for the many ways in which she gave her heart, her presence, and her financial support to the organization's goals. When she joined the Albany Pro Musica board, where I also served, I couldn't have been more delighted when she took the reins as president and led the organization with great spirit through some very difficult years.

Karen was truly a BELOVED person in our community who moved our region and the university forward in important ways. God bless you all as you mourn her death and remember her for the truly exceptional person she was.

Carol F. Bullard, Ph.D.

Carol Bullard - July 15, 2019 at 12:06 PM



“ I work at SUNY Albany as an SSA for the University Police Department. I met Karen when she first became President. I was dressed as a Medieval Knight at the Ferocious Feast. I've also worked as a character actor, she enjoyed my portrayals as Frankenstein and Santa. She was, and always will be known as a Great Lady, and I shall miss her!

SSA Paul G. Kuhn

Paul G. Kuhn - July 15, 2019 at 09:38 AM



“ My sympathy to Karen's family. I first met her when she was a board member of St Peter's Hospital. She was so gracious, so professional and such a role model for women leaders. I recently heard a radio clip of her speaking what she hoped her legacy would be: participative, collaborative leadership. Indeed we are the richer for her presence among us in the Capital Region.

Gail Waring RSM - July 14, 2019 at 09:26 PM



“ Friends and Family of Dr. Karen R. Hitchcock:

My strongest and most sincere condolences to all of you on your loss. A loss to a much wider community as well.

Blessed with an incredible intellect surpassed only by her great humanitarian spirit and sensibility.

May your period of bereavement and grief be, mercifully, short.

God bless you all !

Edward J. Bradley, Sr., M.P.A. - Albany, New York

Edward J. Bradley, Sr., M.P.A. - July 14, 2019 at 11:58 AM



“ Beautiful Dreams was purchased for the family of Karen R. Hitchcock Ph.D..



July 13, 2019 at 03:35 PM



“ My deepest sympathies to all of Karen’s family, for there great loss! I was blessed and honored to have meet Karen many years ago when she came to Bellezza salon. What an amazing woman and client she was to me, always great conversations. I will miss her very much but always have great memories. From Iris and all the staff from Bellezza Salon

Iris Delligan - July 13, 2019 at 08:07 AM