MEMORIAL RESOLUTION
ALVIN L. LYONS, II
(1950 – 2017)

After a short illness, my student and colleague, Alvin L. Lyons, II, died March 15, 2017, in Bloomington, with his wife, Susan, at his side. He was one of the first recipients of the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Philanthropic Studies from the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy and served as a lecturer at the School of Public and Environmental Affairs from 2010 until his death. Al was valued not only as a teacher, but also as a trusted board member and advisor for many nonprofit organizations in Bloomington and elsewhere. Fittingly for a person with a passion for the theater, he was a man of many parts and he played them all well.

Al was born in Peoria, Illinois, but went West as a young man, graduating from Colorado College, Colorado Springs, in 1973, where he played four years of Division III football. He went to work for Lyons Associates, a family-owned company in Colorado that provided fund-development consulting services to nonprofit organizations, particularly hospitals, throughout the United States. Lyons Associates specialized in developing community networks of volunteer leaders to raise funds for its clients.

As senior vice president and director of educational services from 1973 to 2002, Al developed and conducted over 200 seminars for more than 3000 nonprofit professionals and community leaders. He created the materials used in these programs on a wide range of topics, including annual giving, planned giving, special events, major gifts, marketing and public outreach. Al also co-founded the Aspen Academy for Fund Development, which provided training for fund-raising staff in the growing number of organizations in that part of Colorado, and was a frequent speaker at state, regional and national programs run by the Association of Fundraising Professionals, the Association for Healthcare Philanthropy, and the American College of Healthcare Executives.

Along with these activities, Al was able to pursue his life-long passion for the theater. In 1983, he helped start Aspen Stage, a local theater that acquired an international reputation and assisted other theaters and a dance collective in Colorado’s Roaring Fork Valley to get underway. (Its unofficial motto: “Aspen Stage, where drunken fantasies become reality.”) Al’s achievements as a producing director included more than fifty plays for the stage and over 100 for radio, including several which aired on National Public Radio. “A gifted director and actor, and a genius at developing a company,” an Aspen colleague wrote in tribute, “there are very few theaters in Colorado that have not had the gift of Al’s handiwork with board and organizational development.” At his death, Al was preparing to bring a new show to the 2017 Colorado Theater Festival.

Al and his wife were regular attendees at the annual Shaw Festival at Niagara-on-the-Lakes, Ontario. In addition to going to performances, Al participated in symposia sponsored by the International Shaw Society, presenting papers that combined his love of the stage with his dedication to philanthropy. They invariably had intriguing titles, such as “Hankin v. Shaw: Reforming the Philandering Philanthropist” (2014). When he passed away, he was working on a
paper on Shaw’s tragic heroine, *Saint Joan*, “the only woman,” a British critic once wrote, “who ever managed to wipe the smirk from Shaw’s face.”

Al came to Indiana University at the beginning of the millennium for a version of the Center on Philanthropy’s MA in Philanthropic Studies program designed for experienced professionals. Refuting the old canard that those who can do and those who can’t teach, Al showed he was as adept at studying and teaching fund-raising as he was in its practice. He earned his master’s degree in 2003 and was admitted the following year to the Center’s new doctoral program in philanthropic studies, the first of its kind in the world.

As might be expected, the faculty involved with the program were more or less designing it as they went along. Nor did they have much idea about what graduates would be able to do with their degrees, assuming, that is, they could attain them.

These challenges did not seem to deter Al and his six classmates (dubbed the “Mercury” class by the program’s director in reference to the first cohort of U.S. astronauts). Al did exceptionally well in his coursework and submitted a dissertation on “The Philanthropic Behavior of Hospitals,” under the direction of IUPUI economist, Richard S. Steinberg, who had also supervised his master’s thesis. In 2009, he was awarded a PhD, joining just three others who had earned that degree. Thanks to the work Al and his classmates did in defining a new field and bringing coherence and legitimacy to it, nearly two dozen other students have now followed in their footsteps, with more to come.

While a graduate student, Al helped to develop a new certificate program in “social entrepreneurship,” a way of thinking about philanthropy and business that emphasizes what they have in common, not how they differ. This too was challenging. Although the two participating schools, the School of Public and Environmental Affairs and the Kelley School of Business, had long shared the same corners of the Bloomington and Indianapolis campuses, they had rarely, if at all, collaborated educationally. With patience and persistence, Al helped to overcome a variety of obstacles and establish a program that enabled IU students to prepare themselves for the more complex philanthropic world of the future. He also provided leadership for the Global Social Entrepreneurship Institute, another SPEA-Kelley collaboration that was funded by the State Department and aimed at students from the European Union.

After serving briefly on the faculty and staff of the Johnson Center for Philanthropy at Grand Valley State University, Al returned to IU in 2010 as Visiting Lecturer and then Lecturer at SPEA, Bloomington. His primary responsibility entailed teaching nonprofit management courses at the undergraduate (and occasionally, graduate) level. Given the high reputation of SPEA’s nonprofit programs, enrollments were large and the demands of providing instruction on a wide range of topics, daunting. But in addition, Al served as Campus Director for an undergraduate association, the Nonprofit Leadership Alliance, a chapter of a national organization that prepares students for careers in the nonprofit sector. He also taught in SPEA’s Arts Administration program and was a member of the philanthropic studies faculty of the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy. As one of his colleagues observed after his death, Al truly was “SPEA’s workhorse.”
Even so, it was not uncommon to see Al, at the end of a long day of teaching, huddled with two or three students in the SPEA atrium, going over some new initiative or discussing theses or independent readings projects. (Al oversaw several every year.) As if this was not enough, Al gave generously of his time to Bloomington’s nonprofit community, serving as a director, consultant, and instructor in professional seminars for numerous organizations and the city of Bloomington’s Volunteer Program. “He was a wonderfully knowledgeable and wise colleague,” recalled Indiana University’s First Lady, Laurie McRobbie, who worked with Al when she chaired a capital campaign for Middle Way House, “whose calm presence and experience with so many other agencies facing similar challenges was such a boon.” She added, “He had the soul of a great teacher and was always looking for ways to translate scholarship to practice.”

Al is survived by his wife, Susan, of Mesa, Arizona; mother-in-law, Christine Barnes, of Mesa; brother, Jim, and his wife, Patti, Lyons, of Atlanta, Georgia; sister, Karen Barnes, of Denver, Colorado; sister-in-law, Lori and her husband, Steve, Campbell, of Mesa; sister-in-law Kristi and her husband, Greg, Stihel, of Albuquerque, New Mexico; and long-time friends Pat Fell and Bob Barker, and Michael Denunzio, of Bloomington.

I request that this resolution be presented to a meeting of the Bloomington Faculty Council and become part of its minutes and archives, and that copies will be sent to his wife and other relatives.

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