MEMORIAL RESOLUTION
PATRICK O’MEARA
(1938-2021)

Patrick O’Meara passed away peacefully after a brief illness on March 30, 2021 in his Bloomington home at the age of 83. A celebration of his life occurred at Indiana University on September 2, 2021 with a sharing of fond memories and recognition of his accomplishments as IU’s director of African Studies, dean of international affairs and its inaugural vice president of international affairs. O’Meara had great vision and keen insight, was indefatigable in service, and thrived on personal interactions, making friends in all corners of the campus and throughout the world. Patrick was generous and kind, offering thoughtful comments and helpful advice to students, faculty colleagues, and administrative staff.

Joining the IU faculty in 1972, O’Meara was a scholar of comparative politics and international development and professor in the Paul H. O’Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs and the Department of Political Science in the College of Arts and Sciences. In several administrative roles, O’Meara sustained, enhanced and launched initiatives associated with IU’s global engagement. Professor emeritus and vice president emeritus O’Meara retired in 2011, but continued to serve as special advisor to President Michael A. McRobbie.


As director of the African Studies Program (1972-1993), O’Meara managed its rise to national prominence. He oversaw a program that attracted talented students who went on to careers at universities, museums and governmental and non-governmental agencies in the U.S. and abroad. O’Meara encouraged African Studies faculty to work collaboratively on projects that culminated in published anthologies and an innovative CD-ROM; O’Meara himself was project director of the documentary film, Living Africa: A Village Experience (1983). He led IU efforts to support the 1986 founding of Khanya College, a private university in Johannesburg that served working class students when other opportunities were scarce. O’Meara secured funds for these (and other) initiatives from the National Endowment of the Humanities, the U.S. State Department, the Title VI area studies and languages program, and other extramural funding sources.
As dean of International Affairs (1993-2007), and then as the university's first vice president for International Affairs (2007-2011), O’Meara oversaw IU’s global engagements and international partnerships. At the center of IU international activities for almost two decades, he sustained and expanded existing programs and nurtured and consolidated new initiatives, making the international affairs office outward-facing to open opportunities for IU faculty and students and to welcome and assist international students and visiting scholars and dignitaries from abroad. O’Meara managed IU’s Center for International Education and International Development (now the Office of International Development), tapping U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) funds for initiatives, such as the 2001 founding of South East European University (SEEU) in Macedonia. O’Meara led the planning to create IU’s first International Strategic Plan in 2008 to consolidate international initiatives and to envision their future: he set IU on a course to redouble efforts to internationalize IU’s campuses, to increase international teaching and research opportunities for IU faculty, and to provide IU students access to an international education in Indiana classrooms and through study abroad to prepare them to have successful and meaningful careers.

University chancellor, president emeritus and university professor Michael A. McRobbie lauds O’Meara’s leadership: “For many decades, Patrick O’Meara was truly Indiana University’s ambassador to the world, representing the university with extraordinary grace, intelligence, professionalism, collegiality and distinction, and helping to elevate IU’s global reputation to remarkable new heights. . . In his various academic and administrative roles, he greatly expanded the range and depth of international activities at IU in recognition of the rapidly increasing importance of the international and global dimension of higher education for our students, our faculty and the communities we serve.”

Vice president for international affairs, the John E. Schiller Chair in the Maurer School of Law and professor Hannah L. Buxbaum praises O’Meara: “A skilled diplomat and a deft negotiator among foundation and university leaders, government officials, and corporate executives, Patrick forged agreements that funded IU’s research, scholarship, and creative activities and developed long-standing partnerships that continue to shape IU today. From testifying to the U.S. Congress to meetings with university leaders, he was a powerful advocate of the Title VI programs that provide the primary infrastructure supporting the nation’s and IU’s expertise and training in international and area studies.”

O’Meara received multiple international awards and distinctions, including the Amicus Poloniae Award from Poland, La Cruz de San Jorge from Spain, the Magyar Érdemkereszt from Hungary, and an honorary doctoral degree from the National Institute of Development Administration in Bangkok, Thailand.

A resolution at the Indiana Statehouse recognized O’Meara’s life and accomplishments on behalf of the State of Indiana in 2014.
Indiana University bestowed several awards on O’Meara, including the John W. Ryan Award, the Thomas Hart Benton Mural Medallion, the Distinguished Service Award, and the President’s Medal for Excellence. At his retirement, the IU Office of the Vice President for International Affairs established the O’Meara International Lecture Series in recognition of his work in international affairs and to celebrate his legacy of enriching the university's international involvement; this lecture series brings leading international figures to campus annually.

A naturalized U.S. citizen, O’Meara was born on January 7, 1938, in Cape Town, South Africa, to Daniel and Fiorina (Allorto) O’Meara, immigrants from Ireland and Italy, respectively, who operated a bakery in Cape Town. O’Meara completed his bachelor’s degree at the University of Cape Town, followed by M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in political science at Indiana University (1970).

Closely connected to his extended family, Patrick is survived by his nephew Timothy O’Meara and his wife Bridget (Hoban) who were present during his final days, his nieces Maria, Jeannie, Katie, Eileen, and Suzanne O’Meara, his sister-law Lorraine (Rademeyer), and his eight great-nephews and nieces and their children. His parents, his two brothers, O. Timothy and Daniel, and his sister-in-law Jean (Fadden) preceded him in death.

Patrick valued the arts and music, film and theater, modern architecture and historic buildings, especially cathedrals. His breadth of interests was evident when he interviewed guests as one of the hosts of WFIU’s Profiles, a one-hour program featuring interviews with local and national figures. Nephew Tim O’Meara remembers Patrick’s conviviality: “leaving a Bloomington restaurant or IU musical performance with Patrick was a lengthy affair, as he seemed to know everyone and always stopped to catch up on their lives and make the proper introductions.”

We warmly remember Patrick, our beloved colleague, mentor and friend, for his kindness and generosity, his wit and charm, and his sage advice.

I request that this memorial tribute to Patrick be presented to the members of the Bloomington Faculty Council, and that it be preserved in its minutes and archive.

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