

Memorial Minute for Stylianos Panagiotis Scordilis.
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Read by Christine White-Ziegler.
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Stylianos Panagiotis Scordilis- Stan to all of us- passed away on December 29, 2025 in Hatfield, Massachusetts, at the age of 77.

Stan can be summed up by the word “dedication”- dedication to his field, to his research, to his students, to the Program in Biochemistry, the Department of Biological Sciences, and to his pet project, Ford Hall. He served Smith College for nearly 50 years, a goalpost we believe he hoped to hit before retirement. We valued his passion for biochemistry and cell biology and his leadership, but also his kindness and reminders of the other important parts of life-enjoying good fun, food, wine, and music with friends and family.

Anyone who knows Stan, knows he was a very proud alum of Princeton where he earned his undergraduate degree in Biology with minors in chemistry and music. He earned his PhD at the State University of New York at Albany with a concentration in biophysics, followed by a postdoctoral fellowship at the National Institutes of Health. Stan joined the faculty in 1978 as a member of the Department of Biological Sciences. As he told it, he was also promptly “volunteered” to be part of the Biochemistry Program by a senior faculty member.

Stan taught cell biology and biochemistry for time eternal and never lost his passion for the field or for sharing it with students. His desk was piled high with papers detailing the latest new findings, and he invariably started conversations with “Did you see that paper on...?” This love found its ways into his classes; students and alums have commented on how interesting they were. His assessments, however, were not so fondly remembered... he was notorious for “select all that apply” and “true or false, then fix it” questions that earned his course such nicknames as

“Cell Hell” or “Hell Bio”. This strategy of testing, however, reflected his love for knowing how things work at the molecular level that he hoped to impart to his students.

Those students who shared his delight in the molecular and mechanistic were drawn to his lab that studied muscle development and responses to stress. He mentored over two dozen Masters and 38 Honors students, along with numerous Special Studies, STRIDE, and AEMES projects. The students found a home in his lab where he encouraged and expected rigor while at the same time developing a sense of community. He coaxed them to early morning lab meetings with Dunkin Donuts or late afternoon ones at Packards. He held gatherings at his house and taught a few of them to ski. In turn, you could see sayings posted across his lab including “Live Love Lab” and “What would Margaret Rakas Do?” that showed the bonding within his lab. As these students became alums, he was like a proud father, telling us frequently of their professional accomplishments and personal milestones. They, in turn, kept in touch with him and were effusive in sending us their memories when he passed.

His research evolved with the scientific techniques he so passionately explored. He started with making mice run on a downhill treadmill to mimic the eccentric muscle damage you get when hiking down a steep hill. This strategy evolved with the advent of proteomics where his work transitioned to muscle development in cell culture. Seeing the promise of this new technology, he pushed forward the Center for Proteomics by landing a prestigious NSF MRI grant to fund our first mass spectrometer and co-authoring a paper that laid the foundation for the 5 science focused Centers in STEM. He unwaveringly supported this initiative throughout his career, serving as the Director for the Center for Proteomics and developing a course-based research class based on this technique.

His leadership was felt even more deeply in the Biochemistry Program and the design of Ford Hall. Celebrating its 70th anniversary this upcoming year, Biochemistry is the oldest interdisciplinary program at Smith, a fact Stan would proudly state. He guided a sizable portion of its longevity, serving as Biochemistry Director for 11 years from 1995-2006 and again in 2016-2020. He fostered the Biochemistry Program's growth in its number of majors, the faculty members involved, and the breadth of research projects students would pursue.

From 2006-2009, Stan served as the Special Assistant to the President for Ford Hall. It was a building project with complex needs for a variety of scientists along with the common challenges of departments jockeying for space. He kept such a vigilant eye on the architect's plans that even years later he could tell you details about specific rooms in the building and Facilities often went to him for information when starting a new project. He kept his Smith College hard hat in his office all these years attesting to the pride he felt in this accomplishment.

We would be remiss if we did not mention all the ways that Stan shared his personal passions with others. If Stan was hosting a seminar speaker, we were going to Mulino's (the staff knew him), and he instilled in all of us a love for Montepulciano de Abruzzo. He frequently invited others to his house for dinners that included his Greek specialties. I, for one, enjoyed ski days with Stan where I took advantage of his expert skill to learn how to deal with icy slopes. Those who passed by his office were likely to hear soothing classical music. He was an accomplished organist who held concerts at John M. Greene in his early days at Smith. His email had a byline that quoted Albert Einstein "*If I were not a physicist, I would probably be a musician. I often think in music. I live my daydreams in music. I see my life in terms of music... I get most joy in life out of music -*"

Smith College, Biological Sciences, and Biochemistry are all the better for Stan's leadership and substantial contributions. We think, though, that Stan would most want to be remembered for his students and their accomplishments that he helped to foster. For those who knew him closely as a colleague and friend, we will greatly miss his mentorship, thoughtfulness, and warm smile. We are grateful for having known him - and to use a phrase that he often used, indeed we owe him "many thanks."