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In Memoriam: William Hoben

12.03.2009 | Faculty William J. Hoben, a longtime Daytonian and dean of the University of Dayton School of Business Administration from 1963 to 1985, died Wednesday, Dec. 2, after an extended illness. He was 82.

Hoben is credited with ushering the business school into the information age after he restructured it in the 1970s to lay the groundwork for emerging fields such as computing, decision sciences and management information systems, said dean emeritus Sam Gould of Divide, Colo., who succeeded Hoben.

"He brought the school from just training young business people to having more of a national focus and following the trends of business schools across the country," Gould said. "When you're a dean for 23 years, you bring the school through a lot of phases, and he did that very successfully."

A native of Hardinsburg, Ky., Hoben joined the University in 1956, teaching evening classes and then overseeing the night business school until he became dean in 1963 after a year as an interim dean.

"During his tenure, Dean Hoben made it a priority to gain accreditation from the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business – AACSB International, considered the gold standard of business accreditation," said Matt Shank, the school's present dean. Accreditation was first awarded to the undergraduate programs in 1983; accreditation of the graduate and accounting programs followed in 1988 and 1993, respectively.

In the 1970s, he worked with area business leaders to form the Dayton Alliance for Minority Enterprise, which aided area minority business owners with business planning, financing, accounting and management.

Alumni remember him as tough but fair, said Tom Burkhardt, the University's vice president for finance and administration, and Robert Chelle, executive director of the L. William Crotty Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership. Both worked in Hoben's office during graduate school.

"He expected people to work," Burkhardt said, "and if they did, his recommendation was worth its weight in gold. He had the kind of reputation that if he called a company up, they'd hire them often without an interview."

Hoben routinely dismissed students who didn't deliver academically, but those who demonstrated commitment and renewed seriousness got second chances. Bob Belvedere '69 of Rockville Center, N.Y., was one such student.

"I was the first one in my family to go to college," Belvedere said. "My father was a truck driver, and there wasn't a lot of money, so I had to work a lot. There were also times I decided to go to a party rather than open a book. Dean Hoben told me, 'You're smart. You're not trying. You're capable of doing better.'"

After a couple of terms on academic probation, Belvedere was dismissed from the University. He went home, worked, saved up some money and came back.

"I begged (Hoben) to give me another chance, and he did," Belvedere said. "No one else would have done that. I was there another three semesters, and I never got anything below a B-plus. I made the dean's list the last term."

After completing his service as dean, Hoben served several roles in the provost's office, retiring in 1990 with the rank of dean emeritus. He was the recipient of the first Lackner Award, given every year since 1985 to people who over a long period of time have embodied the University's Catholic, Marianist character.

A U.S. Navy veteran from World War II and the Korean War, Hoben earned his bachelor of science in accounting from the University of Dayton in 1950 and his MBA from Xavier University in 1960. He gained his Ohio CPA licensure in 1960.

He was an active servant of the community. As a member of the Catholic Education Council, he worked to build enrollment in area Catholic schools, and he was among the volunteers who founded the Dakota Street Center, a youth program in West Dayton. He also was a trustee of Sinclair Community College and Chaminade-Julienne High School and a longtime member of the National Conference of Christians and Jews.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be held 10:30 a.m. Monday at the Church of the Incarnation, 55 Williamsburg Lane in Centerville, followed by burial at Calvary Cemetery and a 12:30 p.m. reception at the Boesch Lounge at the University of Dayton Arena. There will be no visitation. Contributions in Hoben's memory may be made to the Dean's Fund for Excellence at the University of Dayton, 300 College Park, Dayton, OH 45469.

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