

8-6-2009

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Recommended Citation

"In Memoriam: John R. Westerheide" (2009). *News Releases*. 1398.
https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/1398

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In Memoriam: John R. Westerheide

08.06.2009 | Faculty John R. Westerheide, 87, the first director of the University of Dayton Research Center, later renamed the Research Institute, died Aug. 5.

Visitation will be 4 to 6 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 9, at Tobias Funeral Home, 5471 Far Hills Ave. in Kettering, Ohio. A Mass of Christian Burial will be 10:30 a.m. Monday, Aug. 10, at St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church, 4500 Ackerman Blvd. in Kettering, Ohio. Burial will be in Calvary Cemetery, 1625 Calvary Dr. in Dayton, Ohio.

Westerheide retired in 1983 after serving as director of the Research Institute for 27 years. The Research Institute was established Sept. 1, 1956, seven years after the University secured its first research contract from Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. Westerheide, who had been hired to lead the University's first full-time researchers on the classified project, penned a seven-page proposal for the "establishment of a centralized research organization at the University of Dayton." This new organization would allow the University to be more responsive to customers, integrate non-faculty research into the University system and establish consistent practices and controls necessary to pass government audits, said UDRI Director John Leland.

Under Westerheide's leadership:

- The Research Institute grew from a handful of researchers in 1956 to 350 full-time employees by the time he retired.
- The Institute, which originally provided mostly support services, evolved into a competitive research organization and was consistently ranked among the nation's top 100 universities receiving federal support.
- After raising funds for a permanent research facility, the University of Dayton in 1969 opened the Kettering Laboratories, which became the home of the University of Dayton Research Institute.
- Research staff completed hundreds of research projects, and their presentations and published articles helped make the University of Dayton known throughout the world.
- UDRI projects strengthened undergraduate programs and provided the impetus for new graduate programs in electro-optics, materials engineering, aerospace engineering, management science and engineering management.

"He was a quiet, simple, humble guy who had an instinct for making administrative decisions and policies that worked," said John Wurst, the Research Institute's associate director under Westerheide.

The University of Dayton last year attracted more than \$94 million in sponsored research, a new record. The University performs more engineering research than any Catholic university in the nation and ranks second in materials research.

Westerheide is survived by daughter Donna (Doug) Merrill and son Paul Wilson, nine grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren, and three sisters.

For more information, contact Shawn Robinson, associate director of media relations, at 937-229-3391 or srobinson@udayton.edu.