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## Benny Soldano was gifted physicist

Furman University

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## Benny Soldano was gifted physicist

**BENNY SOLDANO**, who taught physics at Furman from 1971 to 1987, died January 8 in Greenville. He was 89.

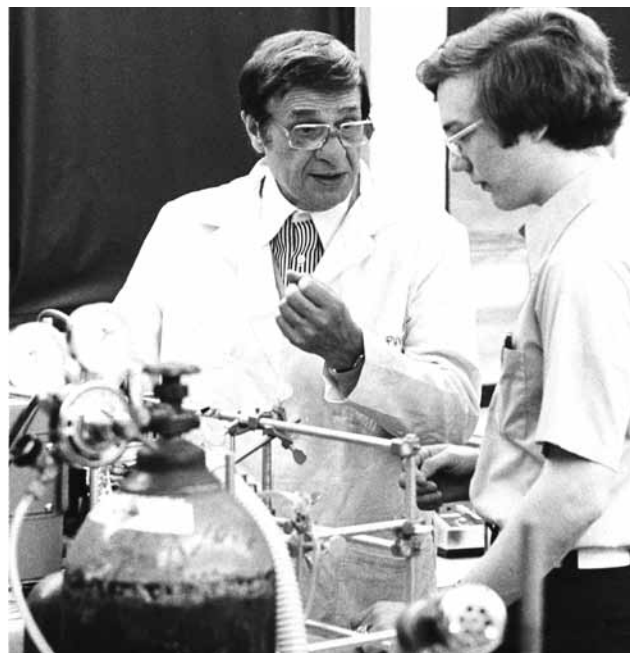
A native of Utica, N.Y., Soldano was a graduate of Alfred University and an engineering officer in the U.S. Navy during World War II. After the war he enrolled at the University of Wisconsin, where he earned a Ph.D. in chemistry and the mathematics of physics and engineering.

He went on to work as a research chemist at Oak Ridge Nuclear Laboratory in Tennessee for 22 years before joining the Furman faculty. During his years at Furman he served twice as a research fellow at the Goddard Research Institute, where he worked with the NASA physics research program. He held a number of patents and published extensively on such subjects as ion exchange, solution chemistry, solvent extraction, nuclear safety and theoretical physics.

Stuart Patterson, former academic dean and chemistry professor emeritus, described

Soldano as “a dear friend and professional colleague with whom I had the pleasure of collaborating for more than 50 years. His stature in physics is attested by the entry in Van Nostrand’s *Encyclopedia of Physics* titled ‘Mass and Inertia,’ which he was invited by the editor to contribute.”

Physics professor Bill Brantley said Soldano “gave himself to his students and friends in an extraordinary way. I had the privilege of team-teaching many courses with him during the time he was at Furman, which was a most beneficial experience for me because of his startling insights into physics and his gift of being able to explain complicated ideas in simple ways that were easily remembered. Among several hobbies he enjoyed, he was a gifted jazz pianist and often entertained his friends.”



Soldano was active in the American Physical Society, American Chemical Society and British Chemical Society. He is survived by four children — each of whom holds a doctorate in their chosen fields — and six grandchildren.

Memorials: Cascades Employee Education Fund c/o The Cascades, 10 Fountainview Terrace, Greenville 29607.

## Professors Hutson, O’Rourke named distinguished mentors

**MATHEMATICS PROFESSOR KEVIN HUTSON** and communication studies professor Sean O’Rourke have been named 2011 recipients of the Howard Hughes Medical Institute Distinguished Mentor Award.

The award recognizes faculty who have made outstanding contributions toward engaging undergraduates outside the classroom in collaborative scholarship and research. It was developed in partnership with Furman’s Undergraduate Science Education Award from the Hughes Medical Institute in 2009.

Since then, six Furman professors from six departments have received the award. Each honoree is granted \$10,000 to support undergraduate research and scholarship activities.

Hutson, associate professor of mathematics, has mentored 13 research students at Furman and at his former institution, Denison University, including 10 in the last five years. Thanks in large part

to his efforts, the number of mathematics students at Furman conducting summer research in recent years grew from a scant few to an average of more than seven per summer. In addition to co-authoring professional publications with Furman students, Hutson has participated as both an invited lecturer and panelist on national disciplinary forums about inquiry-based learning and advising undergraduate research.

O’Rourke, associate professor of communication studies, has directed scholarly writing and research projects for more than 45 students during the academic year and for nine Furman Advantage and South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities summer research undergraduates. Since 2006 he has served as primary mentor for 19 student publications and, in 2010–11, for 17 new submissions. He is also known for his work as faculty advising editor and/or associate editor for multiple undergraduate publications, including *Young Scholars in Writing*, a peer-reviewed journal.