



The University of Vermont
FACULTY SENATE

**Resolution in Memoriam
Charles J. Goodnight
Professor of Biology
1955-2020**

**Presented by Ingi Agnarsson
Associate Professor
Department of Biology
October 19, 2020**

The UVM Department of Biology is sad to report that a beloved colleague and friend, Dr. Charles Goodnight, Professor of Biology, passed away unexpectedly late September. He was beloved by everyone in his department, with a kind nature and optimistic spirit that we will sorely miss.

Charles was an evolutionary biologist who set out to get a Ph.D. at one of the most exciting times in the quantitative development of the field, and in probably the most exciting place for cutting edge thinkers debating the nature of quantitative genetics, natural selection, and evolutionary change: the University of Chicago. Charles was always attracted to underdog theories. He began his life's work on group selection, the idea that natural selection can promote traits at the level of entire groups in addition to those of individuals, and contributed significantly to the development of a rigorous theoretical and empirical investigation of this process with research funding from the National Science Foundation. Over the course of his career, he got the chance to watch as his work contributed to the steady and on-going revival of a theory that had been long ignored as unimportant. He joined the UVM Faculty in 1988 as an Assistant Professor, with promotion to Associate Professor in 1994 and Full Professor in 1999. After nomination by UVM colleagues, he was recognized as a University Scholar in 2002-2003 for sustained excellence in research, creative and scholarly activities. Charles was grateful to UVM for giving him the opportunity to freely pursue his research interests wherever they led. Through the many years he spent here he taught organismal biology, evolution, biostatistics, philosophy of science, and conservation biology to many hundreds of students from the introductory to the graduate level. His quantitative skills were formidable, and he enjoyed both proposing contrarian ideas and delving into the mathematical weeds to suss out their feasibility and importance.

In the last few years, Charles maintained an entertaining and informative blog on multilevel selection and evolution, <https://blog.uvm.edu/cgoodnig/>, which provided a wonderful medium for expressing his thoughts that formed the basis for his magnum opus book, "The Phenotypic Perspective in Evolution: A Postmodern Synthesis," under review right where it should be, the University of Chicago Press.

His colleagues both near and far will miss Charles' good humor, his infectious laugh, and his strong sense of community and fellowship.

Resolution In Memoriam Charles J. Goodnight

Thomas Chittenden
President, Faculty Senate

Suresh Garimella
President, University of Vermont