



UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
FACULTY OF APPLIED SCIENCE & ENGINEERING

Memorial Tribute to

WILLIAM HOWARD (BILL) BURGESS

Professor Emeritus

Department of Chemical Engineering & Applied Chemistry

February 24, 2025

Be it resolved –

THAT the Council of the Faculty of Applied Science & Engineering record with deep regret the death on January 5, 2025, of Professor Emeritus William Howard (Bill) Burgess.

Bill Burgess's journey at U of T began in 1954 when he joined the Department of Chemical Engineering & Applied Chemistry as an Assistant Professor. Born on March 13, 1924, in Chelsea, Massachusetts, Bill's academic path first began at Cornell University in 1942. His studies were interrupted in 1944 when he was drafted into the United States Army, serving in the Signal Corps until his discharge in 1946.

Upon returning to Cornell, Bill earned his Bachelor of Chemical Engineering in 1949, his Master of Food Science in 1950, and his Ph.D. in Dairy Chemistry in 1954, with minors in physical chemistry and bacteriology. During his time at Cornell, he held research and teaching assistantships, laying the foundation for a lifelong commitment to education.

Bill's career at U of T Engineering spanned five decades, during which he became a pillar of the Chemical Engineering department. Promoted to Associate Professor in 1959 and full Professor in 1968, he mentored countless students, inspiring them with his dedication, humor, and unwavering belief in their potential. His teaching style was both engaging and memorable, leaving a lasting impression on generations of engineering students.

Throughout his career, he received numerous teaching excellence awards, and his legacy is honored through the Bill Burgess Teaching Award, which continues to recognize outstanding contributions to education in our department. Upon his retirement in 1989, he was granted the status of Professor Emeritus. He remained an active and cherished member of the U of T community, continuing to teach until 2004.

Beyond U of T, Bill was a member of the American Chemical Society, Phi Kappa Phi, and Sigma Xi. He joined the Association of Professional Engineers of Ontario in 1963, proudly receiving his iron ring.

Bill's teaching philosophy was rooted in the joy of understanding. He once remarked, "There's nothing so wonderful as when the light bulb goes on...The wonderful feeling when you finally understand something, and you want to share your insight with others to help them understand too."

His colleagues and students alike remember him as a remarkable mentor and collaborator, recalling his extraordinary ability to inspire and support others. Many shared how his guidance left a lasting impact on their careers and teaching practices, embodying the very essence of dedication and excellence in education.

Bill's warmth, wisdom, and dedication to education have left an indelible mark on our university. His legacy will continue to inspire future generations of engineers and educators.

Be it further resolved –

THAT this tribute to Professor Emeritus William Howard (Bill) Burgess be inscribed in the minutes of this Council meeting, and that copies be sent to his family as an expression of the respect and gratitude of the members of this Council.

*Prepared by Professor and Chair Ramin Farnood of the
Department of Chemical Engineering & Applied Chemistry*