Andy Montana joined the Cal State Fullerton faculty as an assistant professor of chemistry in 1963. Two years later, he became chair of the Chemistry Department. A position he held until 1971. He earned his bachelor’s degree in chemistry at Seattle Pacific College in 1951, and his Ph.D. in organic chemistry at the University of Washington in 1957. Before coming to Fullerton he taught at the University of Washington and at the University of Hawaii, where he held the rank of assistant professor from 1961-63.

In his position as Chair of the Department of Chemistry, Andy was instrumental in establishing the high standards for teaching and research that are still followed today. Andy, himself, was a charismatic, demanding, and beloved teacher with a wonderful sense of humor. His love of teaching, deep experience, and understanding of problems students face in learning basic chemistry resulted in pioneering work in the use of computer-based dynamic graphics to enhance comprehension of chemistry.

Andy Montana was chair of the chemistry department during the crucial early years of rapid growth. Through his vision and leadership the department developed an academic culture and tradition of striving for excellence in teaching and advisement, as well as in research and scholarly activity. He encouraged new faculty to pursue seriously extra-mural funding for their research programs and to publish their results.

Even after stepping down as chair he continued his efforts to raise the standards of accomplishment of faculty members in all areas through his participation on the department's personnel committee and through his contributions to revisions of the department's personnel document. He was also instrumental in establishing a strong program in biochemistry during the early 1970s by encouraging a series of new hires in this area and the conversion of a portion of the fifth floor of McCarthy Hall to teaching and research laboratories for biochemistry. Andy worked closely with Miles McCarthy on the Health Professions Committee, helping to establish our reputation as a campus that provides an outstanding preparation for health professions programs. In all these activities Andy brought energy, intelligence, and effectiveness.
The computer program “Organic Reaction Mechanisms,” which he developed in collaboration with university computer technician Jeffrey Buell, animated dozens of chemical reaction mechanisms and was a teaching aid that could be used both in computer laboratories and on a student’s own computer, a rarity at the time of its development. It was meant to be particularly useful to students who had difficulty visualizing chemical reactions. Development of the program, which was supported by National Science Foundation grants, began in the 1980s. In 1992 the program won the prestigious national Software and Curriculum Innovation Award from EDUCOM, which was a nonprofit consortium of 650 colleges and universities devoted to information exchange on computing in higher education. In 2006 Organic Reaction Mechanisms earned Professor Montana the MERLOT Award for outstanding educational software. MERLOT is an acronym for Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching, which is an international program for faculty development that is administered by the California State University System.

Andy was an active member of the American Chemical Society. He joined the Orange County Section of the ACS in 1963. He served as Chair of the Section, and he was a long-time member of the Section’s Education Committee. He was an ACS Councilor from 1972 to 1983. He also served on the ACS Committees on Membership Affairs, Chemical Education, and Nominations and Elections. Andy also served as a Trustee of the ACS Group Insurance Plans.

Andy served as Cal State Fullerton’s NCAA Athletic Representative for 10 years. He was president of the Big West Athletic Conference for two years.

Professor Montana played a pivotal role in the development of the Science Laboratory Center (later renamed Dan Black Hall). The science departments at Cal State Fullerton had been housed in McCarthy Hall, the first permanent building constructed on the campus. The Biology and Chemistry Department, and to a lesser extent the Geological Sciences and Physics Department, teaching and research labs were becoming dated by the 1980s, and were in need of significant upgrades. In the interim environmental health and safety regulations had become much more stringent. Upgrading the labs in McCarthy Hall would have been very expensive. Andy recognized this as an opportunity to construct a new, state-of-the-art laboratory building adjacent to McCarthy Hall. Owing to his detailed cost analysis, he was able to convince the CSU administration that it would be less
expensive to construct a new, purpose-built laboratory building than to bring the labs in McCarthy Hall up to the new environmental health and safety standards.

Once approval for the new building was obtained, Andy played a major role in the design of the new facility. His work helped to ensure that the new building included very high quality teaching and research space for our students and faculty.

Andy loved the outdoors. He enjoyed hiking and fishing; and, always looked forward to the start of the chukar partridge hunting season. Chukars typically are found in rugged, high desert country. Chukar hunting is not a sport for the faint of heart. Andy was not the sort of person who shrank from a challenge.

Following his retirement from Cal State Fullerton in 1992 Andy moved back to the state of Washington, where he continued to teach for several years, until he finally succumbed to cancer at age 77. He is survived by his wife Kay, son Stephen, grandchildren Shayne and Seth, and sisters Florence Harrison and Delores Meyer.

The Andy Montana Book Fund has been established in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry at Cal State Fullerton to honor his memory. The Fund provides aid to undergraduate student for the purchase of books.

Submitted by
Richard Deming and Patrick Wegner with additional contributions from Bruce Weber and Mark Shapiro
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