

Memorial Resolution – Dave Black
October 24, 1955 – February 13, 2022

It is with a heavy, but grateful heart that I present this memorial resolution for my mentor, predecessor, and great friend, Dave Black. Dave passed away on February 13th, shortly after his retirement from the University. Not only was Dave the co-founder and first general manager of WSUM Madison Student Radio, he was the heart and soul of the station.

Dave was a graduate student in the School of Journalism and Mass Communication during a tumultuous time for campus radio at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and he took seriously his students' desire for a student voice on the Madison airwaves. Beginning in 1995, he worked to obtain WSUM's FCC license and fought to secure a location for the station's tower and establish a home for its studios on campus. While navigating initial challenges to an on-air launch, Dave was innovative in starting WSUM as an internet-only webcast in 1997. In 2002, WSUM took flight as an FM station, and the first broadcast was from his campus office in Vilas Hall.

Dave positioned WSUM as a tool for community service, making it an invaluable asset to the campus and Madison communities. He defined the station's mission to provide community outreach, a hands-on educational environment, and an alternative source of information and entertainment. Dave taught skills related to interviewing and broadcasting, making an impression on students in and out of the classroom and instilling the University's value of sifting and winnowing. With a personal investment in matters of diversity, Dave fostered relationships between WSUM and multicultural organizations across campus. He made WSUM studios and equipment available to anyone who was interested in learning about and experimenting with a variety of broadcast formats.

Dave always saw the bigger picture, and with clarity and certainty could guide others to see it, too. Under his leadership, WSUM became one of the country's largest college radio stations. He grew WSUM's news and sports departments into two of the leading college reporting teams. In a field as ever-changing as broadcast media, Dave consistently had the foresight to predict industry trends. As a result, WSUM is now a nationally-recognized, award-winning college media outlet with an FM signal, three internet radio streams and a podcast shop. To say that Dave Black dedicated his professional life to the advancement of WSUM would be an understatement. In his retirement, Dave was proud to say that WSUM was his legacy. That legacy will live on, largely because the magnitude of his impact is immeasurable.

Dave was an incredibly devoted mentor who was able to adapt his teaching style to the precise needs of each individual. When I was a student at UW-Madison, Dave bolstered my confidence – and gently badgered me – until I agreed to take on a leadership role within the station. Without that job, the rest of my career would not have been possible. After I graduated, he became my most dependable mentor, always available for shop or pep talks when needed. I know from speaking with so many people from the WSUM community that my experience with Dave, while treasured, was not unique. Students, alumni, faculty, and staff in all corners of the WSUM and UW-Madison community have been touched by Dave's dedication and we are all undoubtedly better for his influence.

Dave was hardly all business, though. He was quick to joke and often filled the room with his booming laugh. His smile was contagious and his bear hugs were legendary. Dave had an uncanny ability to bring levity and warmth into every situation. He made everyone feel important and took great care to express his gratitude and pride often. If Dave was in your corner, he was in your corner for life.

Dave was a proud husband, father, grandfather, and dog owner. He was so loved by so many and will be dearly missed by all who were fortunate to know him.

Respectfully submitted by Kelsey Brannan, Director of Radio at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.