

**Memorial Resolution of the Academic Staff Assembly  
Of the University of Wisconsin-Madison**

**On the death of John W. Peterson, Director  
Systems Engineering and Operations  
Division of Information Technology  
University of Wisconsin-Madison**

John W. Peterson served the University of Wisconsin-Madison for more than 14 years, after his retirement from the United States Navy. He began his UW career in August 1994 as a Professor of Naval Science and the Commanding Officer of the Naval ROTC Unit at UW-Madison. He served as assistant dean of the Law School from January 1997 until September, 1998. He spent his next 10 years as the Director of the Systems Engineering and Operations department in the Division of Information Technology until his untimely death April 9, 2009.

John well understood the critical role that technology plays in providing systems and services to the students, faculty and staff of UW-Madison. As the Director of Systems Engineering and Operations at DoIT, his unwavering commitment was that DoIT-supported systems and services would provide top value to the campus, and run on an infrastructure of the highest possible quality, availability, and reliability. This vision drove the many significant improvements and contributions he made to his department, to DoIT, and to UW-Madison.

John was looked upon as a leader not because he demanded respect, but because he earned respect by the way he treated his staff. As a leader, he was always proactive in his ability to see the need to improve both the DoIT organization and the IT practices on campus. John foresaw the need to establish a group within DoIT charged with systemically improving IT processes using an operational framework approach. Six years later, this effort has produced tremendous improvements in reliability and support for UW-Madison and UW System's enterprise systems, as well as a model for peer institutions.

John sought collaboration in many efforts. He was the founding member of the Technical Directors group at DoIT and chaired the Infrastructure Coordination meetings. Both groups focused on ensuring there was the coordination, collaboration, and communication that was necessary to move projects forward and to maintain reliable computing services at the same time.

Perhaps his greatest gift was his wise and nurturing management style. He realized that an empowered staff is an effective staff, and he mentored and guided them toward his vision of quality delivery of DoIT's services in support of the central missions of the University. If John put his faith in you to do a job well, it wasn't a blind faith, it was the kind of faith that said, 'I have confidence I chose the right person for this job: don't let me down.' John was frequently encouraging and willingly lent his advice to a problem, but he always made you want to do the best job you could do - you know he expected nothing less. Perhaps it was his military background, but John had an easy confidence in his leadership style that bore traces of his many successes and a few hard fought defeats.

He was the invisible hand, rarely felt, but always there. Ultimately, his generosity coupled with his enthusiastic sense or purpose and general lust for life made working for him and with him both a pleasure and a reward.

We'll miss John.