Saddleback College Professor
Howard Adams Dies

Professor Howard Adams, a cherished faculty member of the Saddleback College Division of Health Sciences and Human Services, passed away on Saturday, January 17th from a very aggressive malignant melanoma. Treasured by his colleagues and students, Howard was a generous and hardworking man who truly loved his Saddleback College family.

Memorial services will be held on Saturday, January 31st at 2:00 p.m. in the McKinney Theatre at Saddleback College. In lieu of flowers, please send donations to the American Cancer Society (www.cancer.org) or the American Melanoma Foundation (www.americanmelanomafoundation.org).

“Saddleback College won’t be the same without Howard Adams, an inspiration to the many students, faculty, staff, and administrators who worked with him. Howard had an incredible combination of knowledge, compassion, and enthusiasm that made him a favorite professor to his students. I can say without hesitation that those who learned under Howard’s tutelage are among the best and the brightest in health care,” stated Dr. Tod A. Burnett, President of Saddleback College.

Born in Alberta, Canada on May 31, 1950, Howard moved to Laguna Beach with his family when he was a young child and graduated from Laguna Beach High School. As an adult he settled in San Clemente, where he lived until he passed away.

Howard aspired to be a nurse ever since he was a child, when he spent many months in the hospital as Orange County’s last polio patient. He earned a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree in nursing at Loma Linda University, and launched his teaching career in 1975 in the Saddleback College nursing department, where he was once a student. The following year, Howard went on a one-year leave for a project at M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, while he was also successfully treated for Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma.
Early on as a professor, Howard showed an unmatched ability to multi-task, and in 1988, after the college obtained the Orange County Health Care Agency contract to provide paramedic education for all fire service agencies and qualified private students seeking a paramedic career, he began lecturing in the college’s newly established paramedic program while he continued to teach in the nursing department. A true humanitarian, Howard also worked outside of the classroom as a member of the organ transplant team at the University of California, Los Angeles. In 1994 he became a full-time faculty member in the paramedic program, and his knowledge and skill, combined with his ability to embrace the philosophy and discipline of the fire service, helped to solidify the college’s partnership with the region’s fire departments. Recognized throughout Southern California for his excellence as a paramedic instructor, Howard was the recipient of the Orange County Emergency Medical Services System Advocacy Award in 2007 for exemplary work with students, patients, and the Emergency Medical Service.

Howard’s students are his legacy. More than 2,500 graduates of Saddleback College’s paramedic and nursing programs were his students, and they now provide most of the emergency medical care administered in Orange County and are vital staff members at many hospitals in the county and across the nation. He taught nearly every nursing student that came through Saddleback College’s nursing program, and nearly all county paramedics are Saddleback College graduates. Howard’s influence extended well beyond graduation for so many of his students, who maintained close friendships with him and provided great support to him throughout his illness.

Howard always spoke of his love for Saddleback College and worked until three weeks before his death. Just before he passed away, he said to his friend Dixie Bullock, former president of Saddleback College, “You know, what I hate most about this is that I love my job.” He often took on critical assignments outside of the classroom, and in 2001, Howard became Chair of the Saddleback College Curriculum Committee, a very important position that he held until his passing.

Of Howard Adams, Dixie Bullock stated, “Howard was generous and thoughtful and will always have a special place in my heart. His knowledge of organ transplants was an enormous help to my family when my husband needed an emergency heart transplant. Not only did Howard offer a wealth of information to us, but he met each of my adult children as they arrived at the hospital, and he personally paid for me and my daughter to stay at a hotel near the hospital. Howard’s kindness and selflessness will not be forgotten.”

Howard’s enthusiasm and cheerfulness were infectious, and he was a true inspiration to all who were lucky enough to know him. He was the rare individual whose shining presence brought so much warmth to those around him. Howard’s genuine spirit and affection for his colleagues, students, and Saddleback College are irreplaceable and he will be greatly missed.