

Dr. James Douglas Brown II, First President of Thomas Edison State College, Dies at 63

Trenton, N.J....Dr. James Douglas Brown II, the first president of Thomas Edison State College, the nation's premier institution of higher learning for adults, died Dec. 3 in New Haven, Conn., after a long illness. He was 63.

"It is because of Dr. Brown's original vision and leadership that Thomas Edison State College has achieved its current status as a leader in higher education for adults," said Dr. George A. Pruitt, president of Thomas Edison State College since 1982. "Jim Brown envisioned the tremendous possibilities of a College which would enable adults to complete academic degrees of the highest quality beyond the barriers of time and place. He translated this vision into action strategies which set the stage for the phenomenal growth the College has experienced in the past decade. At the same time, his great passion for education and his caring concern for the individual student set the tone for student-centered learning which is the hallmark of Thomas Edison State College. Jim Brown was a true original, and he will be greatly missed."

Born in Princeton, N.J., Dr. Brown received a B.S. in economics from Union College in Schenectady, N.Y., and the M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in economics from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He taught economics at Amherst College, Hamilton College and Centre College and served as Assistant Dean and Assistant Professor of Economics with the Graduate School of Business at New York University from 1964-1966. From 1966 to 1969, he served as dean of the School of Business Administration and Professor of Economics with Adelphi University. His career took him to Columbia University where he was Director of Executive Programs in the Graduate School of Business from 1969 to 1972.

In 1972, Dr. Brown was appointed to lead one of the nation's first public colleges designed exclusively to serve adults: Thomas Edison State College. Under his direction, the College became a national leader in the assessment of experiential learning and other innovative educational venues designed for mature adults.

Dr. Brown is remembered warmly by former colleagues as a man who loved people, had an infectious sense of humor and enjoyed his work. In an interview early last year, Dr. Brown reminisced, "It was the only job I ever had where you'd go in through the front door every day with a smile on your face."

After leaving the College in 1979, Dr. Brown continued to enjoy a distinguished career in higher education as Professor of Economics and Dean at Babson College and Post College and Professor of Economics at Southern Connecticut State University.

Dr. Brown was a founding member of the board of trustees of the Council for the Advancement of Experiential Learning (CAEL); a member of the Committee on Alternatives and Innovation and the Delegation to Egypt and Greece of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities; and a member of two visitation teams of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools.

He is survived by a son, James Douglas Brown III of Wynnewood, Pa.; a daughter Elizabeth Brown of Binghamton, N.Y.; and a sister, Doris Brown Hobbes of Australia. Funeral arrangements will be private at the request of the family. A memorial service in New Haven, Conn., will be held at a later date to be announced.