Honorary Distinguished Professor David Vernon Morgan

1941 -2017

It is with great sadness that the University announces the death of Honorary Distinguished Professor David Vernon Morgan (known as Vernon). Vernon joined the University in 1985 as a Professor of Microelectronics and in 1992 became Head of the Department of Electrical, Electronic and Systems Engineering, and later Head of the Cardiff University School of Engineering until 2002. Vernon died at home in Cardiff on Monday, 12th June 2017.

He obtained his BSc and MSc degrees at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, his PhD at Gonville and Caius College and the Cavendish Laboratory at the University of Cambridge, and his DSc (Eng) at the University of Leeds.  He held a University of Wales Fellowship at the Cavendish Laboratory, Cambridge (1966-68), and a Harwell Fellowship (1968-70).  In 1970 he was appointed to a faculty position at the University of Leeds, where he remained until joining Cardiff in 1985.  He also spent time as a visiting scientist at the University of Aarhus, Denmark (1971), at Chalk River Nuclear Laboratory in Canada (1972 and 1974), and was a Visiting Professor at Cornell University (1978 and 1979), as well as a Visiting Associate (1980 and 1981). At Cardiff, in addition to being a Distinguished Research Professor, Vernon was Joint Director (with Robin Williams) of the Cardiff III-V Semiconductor and Microelectronics Centre and was a major force in developing this area of research at Cardiff University. His work laid the foundations for Cardiff’s recent emergence as a worldwide hub for compound semiconductors. He helped Mike Scott to establish the company Epitaxial Products International, the precursor to the world-renowned IQE, which has become Wales’ largest home-grown PLC. His research interests spanned the physics and technology of semiconductor materials, devices and integrated circuits, with particular emphasis on the use of gallium arsenide. This included ion implantation studies, metallisation systems, surface and defect characterisation, together with device simulation studies.  He remained at the School of Engineering as a teacher and active researcher until his retirement in 2010, when he became an Honorary Distinguished Professor.

He acted as a consultant in microelectronics and semiconductor materials to various organisations in the UK, USA and Canada, and served on a number of committees and boards of the Institute of Physics, the Institution of Electrical Engineers, the Ministry of Defence and the Science and Engineering Research Council. He authored three text books and was a Joint Editor of the Wiley Series on Solid State Devices and Circuits (seven books), as well as editor of four research books on microwave devices and systems.  He was the European and Founding Editor of the Wiley International Series on “Design and Measurement in Electronic Engineering” and an Editorial Advisor to Wiley on electronic materials and devices.  He was Chairman to the IEE Books Publication Committee and a non-executive Director to IEE Publishing (1990-2002).

Under Vernon’s leadership, Cardiff’s School of Engineering became one of the foremost in the UK. He received a Fellowship in 2006 for research achievements from his alma mater The University of Wales, Aberystwyth, was Advisor to the MoD Defence Scientific Advisory Council on Electronic Materials, was elected to the Fellowship of the Royal Academy of Engineering in 1996, was a Fellow of the City & Guilds Institute, a Fellow of the Royal Society for Arts, Vice President of the Institute of Physics (IOP) (1992-96), a Fellow of the Institute of Physics, a Fellow of the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) and a senior member of the IEEE (USA). Vernon also served as a Member of the UK government’s 2001 and 2007 Research Assessment Exercise panels for Electrical and Electronic Engineering. In 2004 Vernon was awarded the Papal Cross by Pope John Paul II (Pro Ecclesia et Pontifica) for Distinguished Service to Higher Education.

After his retirement, Vernon was an active member of the South Wales Institute of Engineers and also an enthusiastic Fellow of the Learned Society of Wales (LSW). He was instrumental in the establishment of the Menalaus Medal for Engineering and Science awarded by the LSW and was also involved in the organisation of the prestigious Menelaus Memorial Lecture that takes place at Cardiff University every year.

Vernon will be sadly missed by all who knew him. This includes the many generations of undergraduate and postgraduate students whom he inspired, and the early career academics who he always found time to mentor. He is survived by wife Jean, daughter Suzanne, son Dyfrig, and their families.