

Passed by the IUPUI Faculty Council at their meeting on September 7, 2010.

**Memorial Resolution  
On Behalf of  
Lehman D. Adams, Jr.**

**1925 - 2010**

**Adjunct Clinical Assistant Professor of Oral Surgery & Hospital Dentistry  
Indiana University School of Dentistry**

Indiana University School of Dentistry (IUSD) is deeply saddened at the loss of Lehman D. Adams, Jr., D.D.S, D.Sc. (Hon). Over a distinguished career which included almost 45 years on the faculty of IUSD, Dr. Adams exemplified the qualities of outstanding professional achievement coupled with the highest personal integrity and unwavering commitment to his students, profession, patients and community.

A native of Mansfield, Louisiana and a 1945 graduate of Wilberforce University, Dr. Adams received his D.D.S. degree from IUSD in 1948. Following three years of service as a captain in the U.S. Air Force Reserve, he returned to IUSD for postgraduate studies in oral and maxillofacial surgery. From 1954 until his retirement in 2007 he served on the part-time faculty in oral and maxillofacial surgery at IUSD, the only general practitioner ever to do so. In this role he brought unique perspective to the teaching of oral surgery to our dental students, most of whom become general practitioners of dentistry. During his time on the faculty he was recognized for his commitment to easing the fear and anxiety associated with dental treatment, an extremely important factor in persuading more people to seek regular dental care and thus promoting preventive and public health to a maximum degree.

Dr. Adams was an exceedingly effective and popular teacher. In particular his clinical instruction in oral and maxillofacial surgery, one of the most stressful fields for a beginning student to learn, was legendary. He did much to put not only the patients but the students at ease. Some of our senior faculty members today were students of Dr. Adams. Several of them offered comments on the impact he had on them. For example, one said, "Through his teaching he brought wisdom, skills and good judgment to oral surgery. Not only has he imparted his knowledge and skills; Dr Adams has spent a good part of his professional career helping students with or finding financial support." Another said, "Dr. Adams has demonstrated a great passion for teaching and possesses the patience and persistence necessary to teach novice dental students. Dr. Adams has been an inspiration to me, not only as a teacher but in my professional growth and community involvement..." In addition to his role as an instructor, Dr. Adams made his mark on our School of Dentistry in other ways. He was in fact the first African American faculty member to be appointed at IUSD. His presence, wisdom and advice were highly sought after and valued by many deans. Notably in 2000 Dr. Adams played a leadership role in the Dean's Diversity Task Force and his contributions in this role were a key to the development of what has been an increasingly successful strategy for recruiting, retaining and supporting minority dental students, particularly those destined to practice in Indiana. He also served as co-chair of the Comprehensive Campaign for Dentistry, in so doing raising the awareness and commitment of the dental community to the challenges we face in ensuring an appropriately diverse and representative dental professional workforce in Indiana.

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In organized Dentistry Dr. Adams has been not only a strong leader, but a trailblazer. A long-time member of the American Dental Association (ADA), Dr. Adams was the first African American trustee of the Indianapolis District Dental Society and an alternate delegate from the Indiana Dental Association to the ADA for three years. The National Dental Association (NDA), the national association specifically devoted to the advancement of the African American dental community, particularly benefitted from Dr. Adams' talents. Here he served as an exemplary member for over 40 years, including in numerous leadership positions, such as the House of Delegates, Board of Trustees and as Vice-Speaker of the House. He also served in all the offices of the Indianapolis Component of the NDA and played a major leadership role in the African American dental community in Indiana for over 50 years.

But it was particularly his service to the community at large that made Dr. Adams stand out so uniquely as a professional among professionals and as both a professional and personal role model par excellence. Dr. Adams served in leadership capacities in numerous community organizations, including the United Way of Central Indiana, Methodist Hospital Foundation, Midwest National Bank, Summit Laboratories, Indianapolis Metropolitan Development Commission, Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee, St. Richard's School, Circle City Classic, National Business League, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and Witherspoon Presbyterian Church in Indianapolis.

One of the organizations which was a major beneficiary of Dr. Adams' service was Citizens Gas and Coke Utility. His tenure on the Board of Trustees of that organization began in 1978 and lasted 21 years. In tribute to his leadership in 2003 Citizens Gas established an endowment to fund the Lehman D. Adams Citizens Gas Scholarship for Minority Dental Students at IUSD.

Perhaps one of the most important community positions he held, however, was his appointment by Mayor William Hudnut as co-chair of the landmark Tanselle-Adams Commission on Police use of Deadly Force, the deliberations of which were a major force in suppressing racial hostility in the community.

Dr. Adams was justifiably the recipient of numerous awards which in their totality reflected the high esteem in which he was held by virtually everyone whose lives he touched. Among the most notable recognitions were the Living Legends Award for Community, Civic Affairs and Civil Rights from the Hoosier Minority Chamber of Commerce, the Sagamore of the Wabash awarded by Governor Evan Bayh, and the 2003 Tony and Mary Hulman Health Achievement Award for Preventive Medicine in Public Health. Lastly and certainly in recognition of all the above, Dr. Adams was in 2004 awarded the honorary degree of Doctor of Science by Indiana University, the highest honor our university bestows.

In summary, Dr. Adams' career of over 55 years since his graduation from Indiana University School of Dentistry exemplified the very highest standards of professional excellence and impact, personal integrity and steadfast commitment to his students, profession and community. While his loss is deeply felt by the professional, academic and lay communities, his impact will be with us as long as our school, his students and their patients live.

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*Prepared by Lawrence I. Goldblatt, DDS, MSD, IUSD Dean Emeritus and Professor of Oral and Maxillofacial Pathology*