

May 05, 2015 | By Liezel Labios

## Integrated optics pioneer, UC San Diego professor emeritus William Chang, dies

William S. C. Chang, who helped usher the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the UC San Diego Jacobs School of Engineering into the electronics era, passed away April 25, 2015 in La Jolla. He was 84.

After joining the UC San Diego faculty in 1979, Chang spearheaded the transition of the Applied Physics and Information Science Department to the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Sciences. The vision to expand the spectrum of research at UC San Diego into electronics was spurred by the rise of innovations in semiconductors, integrated circuits and lasers in the late 1970s. He helped recruit faculty to build a world-class electrical engineering department, where research focused on photonics, semiconductors, integrated circuits and wireless communication. In 1987, the Department of Electrical Engineering and Computer Sciences branched out into two departments: the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering and the Department of Computer Science and Engineering.

“Professor Chang was a great mentor to many of us at the Jacobs School of Engineering,” said Paul Yu, professor of electrical and computer engineering at UC San Diego, who has collaborated with Chang on various projects over the last three decades. Yu was among the faculty that Chang recruited in 1983 to build the electrical engineering department.



*William S. C. Chang, who helped usher the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering at the UC San Diego Jacobs School of Engineering into the electronics era, passed away April 25, 2015 in La Jolla. He was 84.*

Chang helped UC San Diego become a leading institution in electronic material and devices research. He is renowned for his pioneering work on guided wave devices, integrated optics, and quantum electronics, which provide the basic science foundations for fiber optical communications. He founded the Electronics Devices and Materials group at UC San Diego, which has achieved groundbreaking work in compound semiconductor electronics and optoelectronics.

“Without exception, he demanded all his Ph.D. students to have a deep understanding of their projects, and he regarded learning as the main gateway to innovation,” said Yu.

Chang’s contributions to the campus continued after his retirement in 1994. He served as chair of the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering from 1993 to 1996 and formed strong partnerships with California industries through programs such as the Center for Wireless Communication at UC San Diego. The opportunity to interact with a great variety of companies in California drew Chang to the West Coast from his previous appointment at Washington University in St. Louis.

Thanks to the generosity of more than 70 of Chang’s students, colleagues, and personal friends, the Jacobs School of Engineering at UC San Diego created the William S. C. Chang Endowed Chair in Electrical and Computer Engineering to honor Chang’s contributions. In 2011, Yu was named the inaugural holder of the endowed chair.

Prior to joining UC San Diego, Chang distinguished himself as an accomplished researcher and academic administrator. After serving at Stanford University from 1957 to 1959 and Ohio State University from 1959 to 1965, he became professor and chair of the electrical engineering department at Washington University in St. Louis in 1965. He played an instrumental role in revitalizing that department and in 1976, was named the Samuel C. Sachs Professor of Electrical Engineering. In 1978, he was presented with the Distinguished Professional Achievement Award by the University of Michigan.

Chang is survived by his wife Margaret Chang, his daughters Hedy and Helen Chang, and his son Hugh Chang.

Donations in memory of Dr. William Chang may be made to the UC San Diego Foundation for the Dr. William S. C. Chang Fund for Student Support, to benefit graduate students in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering. Donations may be made online at [bit.ly/1lclnDo](http://bit.ly/1lclnDo), by calling Amanda Estrada at (858) 246-1559, or by sending a check to 9500 Gilman Drive #0937, La Jolla, CA 92093 (c/o Amanda Estrada).

---

## MEDIA CONTACT

**Liesel Labios**, 858-246-1124, [llabios@ucsd.edu](mailto:llabios@ucsd.edu)

UC San Diego's [Studio Ten 300](#) offers radio and television connections for media interviews with our faculty, which can be coordinated via [studio@ucsd.edu](mailto:studio@ucsd.edu). To connect with a UC San Diego faculty expert on relevant issues and trending news stories, visit <https://ucsdnews.ucsd.edu/media-resources/faculty-experts>.