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UNT mourns the death of Daniel A. Emenheiser, director of diversity education in the Division of Equity and Diversity

DENTON (UNT), Texas — As the University of North Texas community mourns the unexpected passing of Dr. Daniel A. Emenheiser, its director of diversity education — it fondly remembers his extraordinary service and dedication to the university’s commitment to the ideals of equity and diversity.

The York, Pa., native and Highland Village resident passed away June 10 (Saturday) after a sudden attack of acute pancreatitis.

Emenheiser, 52, spent the last eight of his 15 years at UNT in the Division of Equity and Diversity where the quality of his service earned high praise from his colleagues and from many high profile university visitors. Among the distinguished visitors who took special steps to commend him for his graciousness were the late Coretta Scott King, Dr. Maya Angelou (poet, author, educator and activist), Patti LaBelle (Grammy Award winning entertainer and author), B.D. Wong (actor, author and activist), Dolores Huerta (United Farm Workers Union founder) and Lisa Ling (journalist and national television host).

Before taking up his duties in Equity and Diversity, Emenheiser was an assistant professor and associate dean in UNT’s School of Merchandising and Hospitality Management.

Among the terms friends have used to describe Emenheiser are “considerate,” “big-hearted,” “accepting,” “industrious” and “soft-spoken.” He was also known as “one who made a difference” and “one who was never afraid to lead the way.”

UNT presented an Outstanding Staff Award to Emenheiser in February 2004.

“Dan always gave his best to UNT and to others and his performance on the job was consistently outstanding,” said Cassandra Berry, UNT’s associate vice president for Equity and Diversity.

“While all of us who worked by his side will miss Dan as a co-worker and colleague, my heart is grieving now because I have lost a friend that I cared for deeply and genuinely respected for who he was,” Berry said.

In addition to his responsibilities at UNT, Emenheiser worked part-time for the Resource Center of Dallas where he devoted his efforts to helping members of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender community.

Page 2 — UNT mourns the death of Daniel A. Emenheiser

“Dan was one of the most selfless individuals you could ever meet. He always put the betterment of others before himself,” said Gil Flores, director of community center services for the Resource Center.

Emenheiser earned his doctoral degree in education from Oklahoma State University in 1981; his master’s degree in restaurant, hotel and institutional management from Purdue University in 1977; and his bachelor’s degree in food service and housing administration from The Pennsylvania State University in 1975.

Emenheiser is survived by his life partner, Russell Poe, and their five dogs — Buffy, Cody, Chelsea, Cali and Ms. Pickles.

Other family members include his parents, William and Doris Emenheiser; his sister and brother-in-law, Lila E. and Keith Metzel; a nephew, Micah Metzel; and a niece, Cora Metzel — all of York, Pa.

Funeral services will be at 7 p.m. on June 19 (Monday) at the Yorkshire United Methodist Church in York (125 Edgewood Road, York, Pa. 17402).

UNT is planning an on-campus memorial service and reception for Emenheiser on June 21 (Wednesday) from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the UNT Gateway Center (on North Texas Boulevard between Eagle Drive and Highland Street), Room 35. The public is invited to attend. Visitors can park in the Fouts Field parking lot on the west side of North Texas Boulevard.

UNT is planning to add Dan Emenheiser’s name to its Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Ally Scholarship in Honor of Mary Finley and will accept contributions in his name. Please make these donations payable to the UNT Foundation.

In addition, persons wishing to give a gift in his memory can send donations to the Division of Equity and Diversity in support of the UNT Ally Program — a group he helped establish, that respects all people regardless of age, color, disability, gender, gender identity, national origin, race, religion, sexual orientation or veteran status. The organization’s goal is to ensure that UNT is a campus where every person can study and/or work in an environment free from discrimination and harassment.

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Note: Gifts can be sent to the UNT Division of Equity and Diversity; P.O. Box 310937; Denton, Tx 76203-0937.