February 28, 2019

Dear ESF Community,

I would like to take this opportunity to offer my heartfelt thanks to Dr. Donald Leopold for his years of service as chair of the Department of Environmental and Forest Biology.

Don’s commitment and dedication to ESF and its students is inspiring. He has taught approximately 200 undergraduate and graduate students each year in courses including dendrology, plant materials and freshwater wetland ecology, along with numerous graduate seminars on conservation and restoration topics.

He has also done excellent work to increase ESF’s visibility and partnerships. He has organized intensive biological surveys on more than 10 large private properties from Mississippi to New York, leveraging his extraordinary expertise in botany and ecology to provide critical insights on restoration of those lands; in so doing he has generated considerable revenue for Roosevelt Wild Life Station operations and built relationships with individuals who ultimately became major donors to ESF.

Don is the quintessential expert on the autumnal leaf color forecast. Every fall, as the leaves begin to change, media calls come from across the country for Don to not only tell people what they can expect to see as they leaf-peep, but why they are seeing the different colors. No matter how many times Don has answered this question, he always meets it with the same ebullient enthusiasm.

Similarly, Don understands how responding to any and all media requests (no matter how inconsequential they might seem) helps build the College’s reputation as the go-to institution on environmental issues.

Don has a long and impressive resume. He earned his Ph.D. in forest ecology from Purdue University in 1984, his M.S.F. in forest ecology from the University of Kentucky in 1981, and B.S. in ornamental horticulture/nursery management from the University of Kentucky in 1978.

He joined the EFB faculty in 1985 and in 1998 was promoted to Distinguished Teaching Professor, the highest professorial rank in the SUNY system. In 1999, he was awarded the first ESF College Foundation Award for Exceptional Achievement in teaching. In 2004, he was given the SUNY Research Foundation Excellence in the Pursuit of Knowledge award.
Don was named EFB chair in February 2005. He has seen 75 M.S. and Ph.D. students through completion of their graduate degrees, with another five and a half students currently in his graduate program. Don has published more than 70 peer-reviewed papers and seven books with the latest, *Wildflowers in the Adirondacks*, soon to be released.

Additionally, Don has garnered more than $30 million of extramural funding as principal or co-principal investigator, was editor of the *Natural Areas Journal* for six years, is associate editor for the *Journal of Forestry* and on the editorial board of the *Northeast Naturalist*. He is a former chair of The Nature Conservancy, Central New York Chapter, and was awarded their Friends of the Land Award in 1995.

A prolific writer, Don has numerous books to his credit including *Textbook of Dendrology*, the primary dendrology text in North America and which is widely used in other countries. His book, *Native Plants of the Northeast: A Guide for Gardening and Conservation*, is a comprehensive guide to more than 700 native trees, shrubs, vines, graminoids, wildflowers, and ferns that are valuable for garden and restoration plantings. In 2006 it received the Garden Writers Association Media Award, Silver Award (in book writing category).

Don has long been a member of the Ecological Society of America, the Society of Conservation Biologists, and Society of Wetland Scientists. In March 2014, he was selected as one of Purdue’s College of Agriculture Distinguished Agriculture Alumni

Of course, Don is much more than a resume. He is a master gardener and those fortunate enough to have visited his home are amazed at the variety and beauty of the trees and plants in his gardens. A bourbon aficionado Don’s knowledge and appreciation of fine bourbon is well known. He even has a bourbon, Kentucky Son Straight Bourbon, named in his honor as he lent his assistance and advice to Saint Lawrence Spirits when they first began working on their whiskeys in 2016.

I enjoyed working with Don in his position as chair and look forward to his continued contributions to the ESF community. I encourage you to thank Don in person for his dedication and service to ESF.

Sincerely,

David C. Amberg
Interim President