

# Jim Schwing Obituary and Memorial

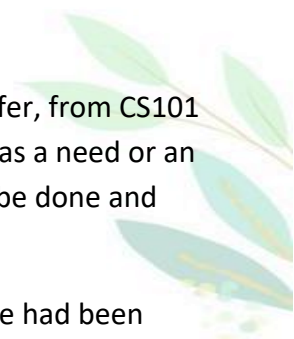
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Dr. Jim Schwing, former chair and professor of the Department of Computer Science at Central Washington University in Ellensburg, WA, passed away suddenly after a very short illness this past May. His daughter Amy was present, and she reported that "his transition was extremely peaceful." It is a great loss for all of us: for those who knew him briefly and for those who worked, studied, taught, and published with him for almost 20 years here at CWU.

Jim – Professor James Lyman Schwing -- known as Jim to all, was a man of honor, intellect, integrity, honesty, and caring: whether it was in his professional or personal life; whether it was through his formal employment or work he was doing for his community or the organizations to which he belonged; or whether he was just there, doing whatever was needed, wherever it was needed. He was one who was beyond kind, selfless, who believed in and encouraged others; an amazing person and a tremendous educator and researcher. So many of us were touched by his strong compassion and belief in our ability to succeed no matter the odds. As a mentor to both faculty and students, his guidance was encouraging, positive, and demanding of honesty, but was also done with humor and gentleness.

After obtaining a PhD in Math from the University of Utah, he became a long-term faculty member at Old Dominion University, working there 22 years, getting married there to his beloved wife, Cynthia, and raising a family. In 1998, he joined Central in the Computer Science (CS) Department and was immediately offered the post of Chair, a position he held for 16 years. During that time, he helped stabilize the department, uniting it with a family-like atmosphere, and realizing several major accomplishments. Jim was actively involved in establishing the Masters-level graduate program for Computer Science, which benefitted the department in a number of ways. It brought recognition and expertise to the department through the hiring of research-oriented faculty, opening up research opportunities for undergraduate students, and pulling in grant funding.

He also instituted and oversaw the development of the Senior Capstone course series that the CS students undertake. This work gets the students out into the community solving a tangible, real-world problem using the skills they have learned throughout their education, working with a professor as their mentor, and then presenting results to the people -- usually small business owners -- who commissioned the project, the community, and the department. Jim was especially proud of the outstanding reviews of the curriculum the independent reviewers gave when evaluating the CS program and this course series in particular. He spoke of it as a hugely positive educational experience—it was, and it continues to be, a highlight of the CS program today.



Jim was one of the very few who could teach any class the department had to offer, from CS101 to the highest-level graduate courses. And he did just that. If he thought there was a need or an issue with a course, he was known to go in and teach it to figure out what could be done and how he could help.

It seems one of his greatest sources of satisfaction always stemmed from what he had been able to do for the students, either an individual student or an entire group. When speaking of research and grants, it was of the opportunities they provided for both graduate and undergraduate students. Of funding from Boeing and NASA, it was “what a wonderful thing to be able to do” when that money was solely for scholarships for students. This was not just something to check off his list; it brought him true joy.

Jim was from the eastern U.S. (Connecticut), but he and his wife were drawn to the west and finally were able to move here. He relocated to Ellensburg and found it “nice and picturesque,” calling it “this wonderful country.” Jim always felt part of the Ellensburg community and was active in the Ellensburg Vegetarian Society, the local branch of his church (Kittitas Valley Unitarian Universalist Congregation - KUUUC), and the Independent Order of Oddfellows (IOOF).

The church states that they are a group “aligned in our desire to make a difference for the good,” while the IOOF states that their organization is “a way to help others and be a part of something bigger than yourself.” *I would say these are perfect descriptions of Jim’s achievements in life.*

*The family requested that the initial service be private. A community service where all are welcome is planned for Saturday, October 8. There will be a gathering at the IOOF cemetery at 11 am, with service and luncheon to follow at 12pm (noon) at Sue Lombard Hall on the CWU Campus. The family is providing the luncheon and requests your response if you plan to attend. Please RSVP to Elise May, [elise.may@cwu.edu](mailto:elise.may@cwu.edu) if you want to attend the luncheon. Deadline for responding is Monday Sept. 19. Thank you.*

