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(Neb.)-Former CSC President Passes Away

By: Chris Fankhauser Posted at: 10/01/2012 10:09 AM

(Chadron)-Dr. Sam Rankin, the president of Chadron State College for almost 12 years from September 1986 through June of 1998, died early Sunday in a Dayton, Ohio, hospital following a short bout with pancreatic cancer.

Rankin and his wife Sharon had lived in Huber Heights, Ohio, a Dayton suburb, since moving from Chadron in 2007. Both were natives of Dayton.

He had turned 70 on Sept. 28, two days before his death. Services will be at 11 a.m. Thursday at St. Peter's Church in Huber Heights. Visitation will be between 10 and 11.

During Rankin's presidency many improvements took place at Chadron State. Several new programs that flourished were begun, there was a tremendous expansion in technology, the enrollment grew by more than 45 percent, scholarship support doubled and the assets of the Chadron State Foundation tripled.

After Rankin became president emeritus, he remained on the campus for nine years as a Board of Trustees Professor of History. After the Rankins moved to Ohio, he continued to teach western civilization courses on line for the college for three more years.

Initiatives begun during his tenure as president included the Rural Health Opportunities Program that brought many outstanding Nebraska students to the campus to study for the medical profession, the Non-Resident Scholars Program that lowers the costs for top students from other states to attend Chadron State, library automation that greatly increased the college's access to information, a master's degree in business administration and a major in range management.

In addition, Chadron State became a leader in interactive distance learning and assisted many regional residents in obtaining a college education. Numerous other technological improvements occurred, including opening of a site on the World Wide Web, several computer upgrades and offering courses over the Internet for the first time.

Rankin also led the way as the Eagles joined the Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference after not having a viable conference affiliation for about 20 years. He was inducted into the CSC Athletic Hall of Fame in 2006.

Physical improvements at the college during Rankin's tenure included construction of the wood-fired heating plant, the Student Center and the Lindeken Clock Tower. The conversion of the Miller Building from a moth-balled gymnasium into a state-of-the-art classroom facility was begun, the college's electrical distribution system was upgraded and the Elliott Field stadium and press box were expanded and improved.

After returning to teaching, Dr. Rankin established the reputation of being an outstanding scholar who was popular with students as he challenged them to make comparisons to what's happening in the modern world with what they have learned through the study of history.

"My time in teaching was extremely enjoyable because I had the pleasure of being paid for doing something that is my

hobby, the study of history and its application to today's world," he said.

Rankin graduated Magna Cum Laude with a major in history from St. Joseph College in Indiana in 1964. He received his master's degree from the University of Wyoming in 1966 and earned a Ph.D. from Kent State University in Ohio in 1971. He received the Alumni Achievement Award from St. Joseph College in 2001.

Rankin was just 32 years old when he was chosen vice president of academic affairs at Valley City State University in North Dakota in 1974. Earlier that year he had been selected as the institution's outstanding faculty member.

He was at Valley City State for nine years before accepting a similar position at Eastern Montana College, now Montana State University-Billings. He was in his third year there when he was selected as Chadron State's eighth president.

Survivors include three sons and a daughter, their spouses and seven grandchildren.

Mrs. Rankin is a registered nurse who worked in that capacity for the Chadron City Schools for 10 years and often was a community health screening volunteer. She served on the Nebraska Educational Telecommunications board of directors, a statewide selection committee for the nation's military academies and the Chadron Community Hospital board.

—Con Marshall, CSC Information Services