

Amos Smith III, Chemistry

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Amos Smith

Amos Brittain Smith III, an emeritus professor of chemistry in the School of Arts & Sciences, died on February 3. He was 80.

Born in Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, Dr. Smith received the first combined BS/MS degree in chemistry ever given by Bucknell University in 1966. After a year of medical school at Penn, he transferred to Rockefeller University, earning a PhD in chemistry in 1972 under William C. Agostain. He then returned to Penn in 1973, joining the Faculty of Arts & Sciences (now the School of Arts & Sciences) as an assistant professor of chemistry. At the same time, he accepted a joint appointment at the Monell Chemical Senses Center, a non-profit scientific research institute founded in 1968 at the University City Science Center campus. He became an associate professor at Penn in 1978 and a full professor three years later. From 1988 to

1996, Dr. Smith chaired the department of chemistry, and in 1990, he became the Rhodes-Thompson Endowed Professor of Chemistry, a role he held until his retirement in 2024.

Dr. Smith's research centered on the synthesis of architecturally complex organic molecules, many with biological significance. This included ongoing projects aimed at inhibiting HIV's entry into susceptible cells and its propagation in infected cells. Dr. Smith authored over 800 research papers and mentored more than 130 PhD students and 200 postdoctoral fellows. He was the founding editor-in-chief of the American Chemical Society research journal, *Organic Letters*, and served in that capacity for 20 years.

Dr. Smith's research was renowned and earned many honors. He received the Order of the Rising Sun from the government of Japan, the Yamada-Koga Prize from the Japan Research Foundation, and an honorary doctorate from Queen's University in Belfast, Northern Ireland. He was a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science, as well as of prestigious learned societies in Japan and France. He earned the William H. Nichols Medal from the New York Section of the American Chemical Society, the Kitasato Medal from the Kitasato Institute, and the Allan R. Day Award from the Philadelphia Organic Chemists' Club. The Royal Society of Chemistry in the U.K. awarded him its Simonsen Medal, Centenary Medal, and Perkin Prize for Organic Chemistry.

Dr. Smith is survived by his wife, Janet; son, A. Matthew Smith, IV; daughter, Kathryn S. Cobb; and son-in-law, L. Travis Cobb.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions can be made to Penn's chemistry department (<https://www.chem.upenn.edu/giving-penn-chemistry>) or to Bucknell University (<https://www.bucknell.edu/azdirectory/university-advancement/ways-give>) with a designation for the chemistry department.