

Max Mintz, Computer & Information Science

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Max Mintz

Max Mintz, a professor emeritus of computer and information science in the School of Engineering and Applied Science, passed away on April 18, following an illness. He was 79.

Dr. Mintz received undergraduate and graduate degrees from Cornell University, then taught at Yale University from 1968 to 1972 and at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign from 1972 to 1974. In 1974, Dr. Mintz joined Penn's faculty as an assistant professor of systems engineering, now part of Penn Engineering's department of electrical and systems engineering. Dr. Mintz was promoted to associate professor in 1976; ten years later, he changed his department affiliation to computer and information science. At that time, he was named the Alfred G. and Meta A. Ennis Associate Professor of Computer and Information Science. Dr. Mintz became a full professor in 1998 and served the department as

undergraduate curriculum chair and a member of graduate groups (including the General Robotics and Sensory Perception [GRASP] team).

Dr. Mintz was well-known as an excellent and engaging teacher and advisor. He twice won Penn Engineering's S. Reid Warren, Jr. Award for Distinguished Teaching (*Almanac* December 18, 1990 (<https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/v37pdf/n16/121890.pdf>)). In 2000, he won Penn's Lindback Award for Distinguished Teaching; in his award citation (*Almanac* April 18, 2000 (<https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/v46/n29/Lindbacks2K.html>)), a student described him as "funny, animated, exciting, clear, passionate, and dedicated." A parent of a student weighed in: "It was Max's concern and caring for my son that made me look at Penn in a way that drew me to support the school in many ways. He genuinely cares for students and will do anything necessary to help them succeed." Dr. Mintz also mentored students, and in 2000, he received the Ford Motor Company Award for Distinguished Advising (*Almanac* May 30, 2000 (<https://almanac.upenn.edu/archive/v46/n34/053000.html>)). Students "raved" about Dr. Mintz in this award's nomination forms: "A strong relationship with a knowledgeable advisor is key for a successful academic career."

Despite his advancing age, Dr. Mintz never retired. In the early 2000s, he served on multiple University Council and Faculty Senate committees and was the associate chair of Penn's University Scholars program, which provides research funding to motivated undergraduates. During a recent stay in the hospital, he was working on his textbook for his Freshman Seminar course, CIS 181: The Quantum and the Computer, which he was planning to publish as a book for the Society for Industrial and Applied Mathematics. In the professional sphere, Dr. Mintz won fellowships from NSF and the Air Force Office of Scientific Research and held a senior resident associateship from the National Research Council. He worked on developing a better understanding of the nature of good algorithms for decision-making under uncertainty, with applications to machine perception and robotics. He published this research widely, writing over 100 papers.

"He was a friend, colleague and mentor to so many of us in Penn Engineering," wrote the school in an online tribute. "We all recognized Max from a block away. He'd be wearing his trademark yellow windbreaker, and he was ever ready with a smile, whether you were a colleague, a student in his class, or a staff member he'd known for years. We will all miss him."

Dr. Mintz is survived by his wife, Caroline Mintz. Information about memorial services is forthcoming.