

Stephen Mintz (1943-2023)

Professor Stephen Mintz was born in Washinton, D.C., in 1943. He received a B.A. in Physics from Johns Hopkins University in 1965, an M.A. from Columbia University in 1967, and a Ph.D. in Physics in 1972 from Johns Hopkins University. After completing a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Miami Center for Theoretical Studies in 1974, he joined FIU as an Assistant Professor of Physics. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 1977 and received tenure in 1979. After his promotion to Professor in 1985, he served as department chair from 1986 to 1989 and from 1996 to 2004. In 2005 he was appointed Associate Dean of Graduate Studies and served in that role till his retirement in 2007.

Under Steve's leadership, the Department of Physics experienced rapid growth. He played a pivotal role in establishing the FIU-Thomas Jefferson National Accelerator Facility partnership, funding eight bridged faculty positions in medium energy physics, and culminating in the department establishing a Ph.D. program in Physics in 1998. In his final years as chair, he was instrumental in growing the department's undergraduate programs, ultimately quadrupling the number of undergraduate physics majors. In 2003, FIU gave him the Outstanding University Professor Award for Sustained Excellence in Research, Teaching, and Service.

Professor Mintz pioneered theoretical nuclear physics, focusing on the structure of nuclei via the weak interaction, from very light nuclei such as deuteron and helium to heavier ones such as iron and iodine. As one of the four fundamental forces in nature, the weak interaction is responsible for most radioactive decay and reveals information about nuclei not accessible with more conventional probes such as photons and electrons. His work on neutrino-induced reactions with carbon nuclei contributed to the design and interpretation of various experiments, and his work on electron-induced weak interaction currents is widely used by experimentalists aiming to extract the axial form factor of the proton. He published over ninety peer-reviewed journal articles and edited over twenty conference proceedings.

Professor Mintz was a frequent speaker at other institutions and laboratories worldwide. He was one of the "old guard" organizers of the internationally famous "Coral Gables Conferences on High Energy Physics and Cosmology, Orbis Scientia," which put Miami on the map of frontier research in fundamental physics. Conference sessions on neutrino physics usually were Steve's responsibility, ensuring a delicate balance of talks on experiment and theory and often contributing the results of his personal theoretical research. The conference talks were commonly published in book form, with Steve as one of the editors. With his wife, Nancy, he provided a welcoming presence for all the conference participants. Sadly, but with many fond memories, they will be missed by all who have attended the Orbis Scientia meetings.

Steve was known by his colleagues for being a voice of reason and calm. He and Nancy loved traveling to conferences. They were especially fond of the Aspen Winter Conferences organized by the Aspen Center for Physics. He had a unique wit enjoyed by those who knew him well. He enjoyed good food and frequented the best restaurants in town. Above all, he appreciated a good glass of wine. His wine cellar was always well stocked with the finest clarets.

Professor Mintz retired from FIU in 2007 as an Emeritus Professor of Physics. He is survived by his wife Nancy, son David and wife Elizabeth, and two grandsons Sam and Liam. He will be missed dearly by his colleagues and former students.