

In Memoriam
D. Charles “Chuck” Whitney
Professor of Creative Writing, *Emeritus*
UC Riverside
1946-2019



D. Charles “Chuck” Whitney, emeritus professor of Creative Writing at UC Riverside and emeritus professor of Communication Studies in the Northwestern University School of Communication, died on February 9, 2019, at age 72 in Evanston, Illinois.

Chuck enjoyed a long and prestigious career in academia, researching and publishing works about the sociology and social history of mass communicators, as well as taking on numerous leadership roles. He contributed to both academic and general interest magazines and was the author and editor of numerous articles, books, and reference works in the fields of communication, journalism, literature, and media studies.

David Charles Whitney was born August 19, 1946, in Asheville, N.C., one of three sons of John Barry Whitney, Jr., a longtime botany professor at Clemson University, and Ruth Krehl Whitney, a junior high school vice principal. Chuck grew up in Clemson, S.C., among the fellow families and children of university faculty. He attended Clemson and earned a bachelor’s degree in English. Soon after, he began reporting for a newspaper in nearby Greenville. His interest in journalism prompted him to earn a doctorate in mass communication from the University of Minnesota, where he met his wife, Ellen Wartella.

After marrying in 1976, Chuck and Ellen began academic careers that they would pursue on parallel tracks for more than four decades. Their first stop was Ohio State University. They moved to University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign’s Institute of Communication Research and stayed for more than a decade, each earning full

professorships. They spent another 11 years at University of Texas at Austin, where Chuck taught in the journalism school and Ellen served as dean of its college of communication. From there they moved to University of California at Riverside, where he chaired the Department of Creative Writing; she was the university's executive vice chancellor and provost.

Many of the faculty in the Department of Creative Writing at UCR recall how Professor Whitney used to bake pies to "bribe" people to come to faculty meetings, post enjoyable puns on Facebook, and tell us that his screensaver image of his own house was to remind him "of what matters," meaning his wife and his sons. He adored his wife, who was UCR's provost at the time, and often spoke of her to us with the giddy pride of a newlywed. Faculty colleagues remember Chuck as kind and smart, a man who wasn't above making fun of himself or doing things like opening a bottle of wine with his teeth in order to make others laugh.

Though also a professor of Sociology and Media and Cultural Studies during his time at UCR, Chuck made no secret of how much he relished being Chair of Creative Writing, a role in which he grew the department significantly, with multiple hires. Faculty development was central to his work, both at UCR and other institutions with which he was affiliated, and the national prominence of the Department of Creative Writing owes much to his efforts. Among the people hired under his leadership were Mike Davis, Laila Lalami, Reza Aslan, Nalo Hopkinson, Claire Hoffman, and Tom Lutz.

In 2010 Chuck moved to Northwestern University as the associate dean for faculty and graduate affairs, with an appointment in the Department of Communication Studies. In his later years, his research focus became the exposure of children to violence in media, including video games. In 2015, Chuck moved to Doha, Qatar to serve as associate dean of academic affairs for NU-Q, Northwestern's campus in the Middle East. He retired and returned to the United States in 2017, but remained extremely close to the Northwestern University community, especially his colleagues at the School of Communication.

He is survived by his wife, Ellen, the Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani Professor of Communication in the School of Communication at Northwestern, his son David, and his brother John Barry Whitney III. Chuck is predeceased by his parents, his brother Robert Krehl Whitney, and his son Stephen Wright Whitney.

This memorial was adapted from obituaries circulated by the Dean's Office of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at UC Riverside and the School of Communication at Northwestern University with editorial changes made by Katja M. Guenther and Tom Lutz.