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UVa's Miller Center Remembers Former Director Kenneth W. Thompson

The University of Virginia's Miller Center mourns the loss of its former longtime director, Kenneth W. Thompson, who died Saturday. A scholar of international relations and the American presidency, Thompson served as the Miller Center's director from 1978 to 1998.

"The Miller Center would not be what it is today without the inspiration and passion of Ken Thompson," said Gov. Gerald L. Baliles, director and CEO of the Miller Center. "Ken initiated much of the work that continues to this day. Because of him, presidential history that might otherwise have been lost will be preserved for generations to come. Ken will be greatly missed, but his legacy will live on as we carry on what he started."

Having received his Ph.D. from the University of Chicago in 1950, Thompson taught there and at Northwestern University. He began teaching at U.Va. in 1975, the year of the Miller Center's founding.

Under Thompson's leadership, many of the Miller Center's initiatives came to fruition, including the Forum Program, the Presidential Oral History Program, and national commissions. He also edited the Center's series of publications on current political issues. After his retirement as director in 1998, Thompson continued to chair the Forum Program until 2004. In recent years, he had provided guidance on Forum operations and scheduling. The Miller Center's Kenneth W. Thompson wing, which houses the Scripps Library, was built in 2003 and named in his honor.

Throughout his career, Thompson has received eight honorary degrees and has held endowed lectureships at Riverside Church in New York City, Duke University, and New York University, among others. He is the author of numerous books and has served as vice president for international programs at the Rockefeller Foundation as well as director of higher education for development at the International Council for Educational Development.

The Miller Center is working with the Thompson family to plan a memorial service in his honor in the coming weeks.

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