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## Beloved Geology Professor Passed Away This Week

Winthrop University

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# Beloved Geology Professor Passed Away This Week

## Quick Facts

- A member of the Winthrop classes of 1963 and 1969, Boland spoke proudly that the Rock Hill schools and Winthrop shaped her and made her the dedicated faculty member she became.
- Her department chair, Pat Owens, said that Boland was a very special person who loved Winthrop and loved geology.

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*Irene Boland*

ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA – Winthrop University **Geology Professor Irene Boland**, 74, a Rock Hill native who earned her Ph.D. 33 years after completing her bachelor's degree and falling in love with geology, passed away Sunday, Jan. 3.

Her funeral will be held at 3 p.m. Wednesday, Jan. 13, at the Episcopal Church of Our Saviour. Greene Funeral Home Northwest Chapel is serving the family.

A member of the Winthrop classes of 1963 and 1969, Boland spoke proudly that the Rock Hill schools and Winthrop shaped her and made her the dedicated faculty member she became.

Her department chair, **Pat Owens**, said that Boland was a very special person. "She discovered a love for geology more than two decades after graduating from Winthrop. She then pursued and earned a Ph.D. in the field," he said. "Irene showed everyone that doing what you love is a wonderful way to live. She loved Winthrop; she loved geology.

"Most of all, she loved her students. Everyone in **Sims Science Building** was inspired by Irene," he said. "I know she infected each of us with a renewed passion and enthusiasm for teaching, for science and for students. We all loved her and will miss her greatly."

**Provost Debra Boyd** added that perhaps Boland's greatest lesson was the way she lived her life. "Irene never let the challenges she faced stand in the way of doing what she loved with passion, enthusiasm and excellence," she said.

Winthrop awarded Boland the **James Pinckney Kinard and Lee Wicker Kinard Award for Excellence in Teaching** at the December 2012 Commencement ceremony. Recognized for winning the Kinard teaching award by the York County Chamber of Commerce, she thanked her teachers at a chamber recognition breakfast for making her a lifelong learner.

She also was a recipient of the **Phi Kappa Phi Excellence in Teaching Award** in 2000. As a leader in her field in the Carolinas, Boland served on the Board of Directors of the **Carolinas Geological Society** and was its president in 2005.

In the last decade, Boland incorporated field trips into her geology lab courses, taught non-science majors, wrote a chapter on how geology affected the American Revolution battle of Eutaw Springs in a book focusing on military geology, and won a research council grant to develop a new laboratory manual for Winthrop's earth and space science sequence.

A few years ago, the **National Park Service** published the **Digital Geologic Map for Cowpens National Battlefield**. About 90 percent of the map was completed by Boland, an effort that took years of work.

In 2014, Boland established a new Winthrop endowment to assist geology and physics faculty members in attracting and retaining high-caliber students interested in conducting summer research projects.

Called the **Charles A. Boland '08 and Irene Brunson Boland '63 Student Research Assistantship Endowment**, it provides financial support to students who commit to summer research in chemistry, physics and geology. The endowment was named in honor of Boland's late husband, who earned his B.S. in environmental sciences (minor in geology) at Winthrop in 2008.

The university named Room 209 of **Sims Science Building** – where Boland taught historical geology every fall semester for the last 20 years – in her honor in 2014.

Boland attended kindergarten through third grade at Winthrop Training School, then later earned a B.A. in chemistry and biology (minor in secondary education) and a M.A.T. in chemistry at then-Winthrop College. During the mid-1980s, while teaching part time at Winthrop, Boland was given a text on plate tectonics and discovered a passion for geology. She earned a Ph.D. in 1996 from the University of South Carolina.

For more information, contact **Judy Longshaw**, news and media services manager, at 803/323-2404 or [longshawj@winthrop.edu](mailto:longshawj@winthrop.edu).

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