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Former UCT vice-chancellor Stuart Saunders passes on

The University of Cape Town (UCT) is saddened to confirm the passing of Professor Stuart Saunders, who served as vice-chancellor of the institution from 1981 until 1996.

The 89-year-old Saunders died in his sleep on 12 February 2021, having been ill for some time. In paying tribute to Saunders, the UCT flag has been flying at half-mast from the morning of Friday, 12 February 2021.

Saunders, who led the university for 15 years, graduated with an MBChB degree at UCT in 1953. He did further studies at the Royal Postgraduate Medical School in the UK and at Harvard University in the US, before returning to UCT to complete a Doctor of Medicine degree in 1965.

Among the many honours received in an accomplished career, Saunders was awarded The Order of the Baobab – a national honour for South Africans for distinguished service to their country – in 2002. He has been awarded seven honorary degrees by the universities of Aberdeen, Cape Town, Princeton, Rhodes, Sheffield, Toronto and Wits.

In May 2018, UCT launched the annual Dr Stuart John Saunders Lecture, which has since been held annually in his honour and was made possible by his late wife Anita Johanna Saunders, whose intention was to pay tribute to the values demonstrated during Saunders' tenure as vice-chancellor and his impactful medical research.

Among the many roles he served in, Saunders was a board member for the UCT Trust in the United Kingdom, president of the UCT Heritage Society, president of the UCT Convocation, and trustee of the Claude Leon Foundation.

The university will issue a full tribute to Saunders in due course.

UCT conveys heartfelt condolences to his children, Jane and John, the entire Saunders family and to those who knew or worked with him.

ENDS

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