

In Memoriam...

Lynn Preston, the longtime Leader of the ERC Program and lead author of this History, passed away on October 26, 2020 after a lengthy illness.

Although in her total of 42 years at the National Science Foundation she accomplished many important things and achieved high recognition for her leadership and innovative management skills, Lynn was best known for the ground-breaking ERC model of academic engineering research and education—one based on strategically planned cross-disciplinary research, strong industrial partnerships, and active involvement of students of all levels in center research—that has strengthened our nation’s industrial competitiveness and been influential in transforming academic team research, engineering education, and industrial practices.

Lynn Preston’s achievements did not go unnoticed. In 1999, the President of the United States recognized her service by conferring on her the rank of Meritorious Executive in the Senior Executive Service. In 2000, NSF bestowed on her its prestigious Distinguished Service Award for her leadership of the ERC Program and its role as a model program for industry/university collaboration in NSF and around the world. In 2003, she was honored by the National Society of Professional Engineers as NSF’s Engineer of the Year for her contributions to engineering research and education. In 2006, she was elected a Fellow of the American Institute of Medical and Biological Engineering for her leadership in developing and sustaining NSF support for the field of bioengineering. And in March 2014, she received the D.I.C. Wang Award for Excellence in Biochemical Engineering, presented jointly by the Society for Biological Engineering, the American Institute for Chemical Engineering, and the American Chemical Society.

But awards are only an outward reflection of human qualities of exceptional commitment, leadership, character, and integrity. Throughout her long career, Lynn Preston was a creative and inspiring leader and a highly dedicated public servant, a valued colleague, mentor, and friend to many. Her achievements, including this book, comprise a legacy that will long endure.