

Leigh H. Harden

June 22, 1907 — May 3, 1989

Leigh H. Harden served twenty-five years as admissions director for the New York State College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and Cornell University prior to his retirement in July 1970. In recognition of his outstanding contributions to the College's Office of Admissions, Professor Harden was awarded the title of professor in personnel administration emeritus. Harden was a key contributor in the development of a unique admissions process in which each entering student is matched to an individualized curriculum.

Other admissions areas which received significant help from Harden included improved procedures for pre-registration in courses; development of detailed profiles and statistical reports about entering students; preparation and teaching of students in an orientation course; and, of utmost importance, patient and objective private counseling of hundreds of perspective students and their parents, many of whom subsequently expressed personal gratitude for this help.

Harden was born in Lane, South Dakota, farm-reared and rurally educated. The Harden family traveled widely and Leigh was attracted to the strong agricultural program at the University of Minnesota. He entered the baccalaureate program and received his B.S. degree with distinction in 1932. After a stint as a high school teacher of vocational agriculture and after marriage to Melba Webster, Leigh returned to the University of Minnesota as a graduate student and later as an assistant to the dean of the College of Agriculture, Forestry, and Home Economics. He obtained his master's degree in 1938 and continued work in the Ph.D. program, completing all course work and passing qualifying and language examinations. Harden's interests in college and university administration were broad as evidenced by his appointment in 1944 as Director of the Bureau of Veterans Affairs for the entire University of Minnesota. In this role, he worked on a project of educational adjustment for servicemen returning home during the latter stages of World War II.

An opportunity to join the administrative faculty in the College of Agriculture at Cornell University materialized in 1945. At the urging of a Minnesota colleague who had attended Cornell, Harden accepted an invitation to become Director of Admissions and quickly initiated several innovative programs in the admissions area. His initial appointment was that of assistant professor in personnel administration. Leigh was promoted to the rank of associate professor in 1949 and to full professor in 1955.

Harden authored several articles dealing with problems in agricultural education, guidance, and student counseling at the college level. He was a member of the New York State Personnel and Guidance Association, the State Association of College Deans and Personnel, the American College Personnel Association, the State University of New York Admission Officers Association, Alpha Gamma Rho, Alpha Zeta, Phi Delta Kappa, and Gamma Sigma Delta.

In all his professional activities, Leigh Harden was known as a fair, yet exacting, administrator. His complete integrity in dealing with the diverse demands of college admissions was never in question. His fellow faculty members, the athletic administrators and coaches, and the university's administrative staff held Leigh in high esteem. Certainly his 25 years of service bore strong testimony to his important role as a molder of the entering classes and, ultimately, of the outstanding alumni of Cornell's College of Agriculture and Life Science.

In his retirement, Harden found comfort and pleasure in his family, his gardening, and his church. In his garden, gladiolus was his particular favorite. He was a member of the Enfield Valley Grange, a former 4-H Club leader, a participant in the Tompkins County Senior Citizens Council, and a member of the American Association of Retired Persons. Especially close to his heart was his longtime membership and Trustee activities in the Bethel Grove Bible Church.

Leigh is survived by his wife Melba Webster Harden, of Ithaca; one son, Gary; one daughter, Beth; seven grandchildren; two nephews, several nieces; grandnieces, grandnephews; and cousins.

Russell Martin, S. Reuben Shapley, Herbert L. Everett