Frank Messina Tribute

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Frank Messina works with undergrad student Alexandra Lish

The Department of Biology lost a dear friend, colleague, teacher and mentor in Dr. Frank Messina. Frank passed away unexpectedly at home on February 25th. Our hearts go out to Frank’s family at this tragic loss. Frank was the quintessential faculty member – he taught in the introductory biology series, the former capstone evolutionary biology course, and many other courses over his career. Frank was one of the best known faculty by our undergraduate students. He was an excellent instructor and knew how to engage students in learning the challenging topics of evolution, ecology, and animal behavior. As an example of his teaching expertise, Frank was awarded the College of Science Teacher of the Year in 2013.

Frank studied insect behavior, genetics, and population biology. He and his student research mentees studied the evolution of host plant ranges in herbivorous insects. A favorite model insect of study was the seed beetle, Callosobruchus. His research system was used in the introductory biology lab course to introduce students to learning how to conduct actual biological science research (i.e., how to be a scientist), collect data, and analyze and summarize it for contributions to research publications. Frank made lasting impacts on undergraduate students he mentored in his lab. His research mentees frequently went on to attend graduate and professional schools.

Frank was generous with his time and expertise. He served on numerous promotion committees and was a teaching and research mentor to many early-career faculty. His insightful vision of biological science training and research needs of the future made him the ideal chair of the department’s long-range planning committee. His current service on the undergraduate scholarship committee is indicative of his dedication to USU’s students and high-quality educational experiences. Frank was the Biology Department’s nominee to the College of Science Faculty Service Award in 2022.

Frank will be greatly missed by all who knew him. His family has established the Frank Messina Memorial Scholarship Endowment in his honor and as a testament to his unwavering commitment to Biology’s students and their higher education. Donations can be made at: https://www.usu.edu/advancement/give/memorial/messina.