

UO math professor John Leahy, whose career at the university spanned more than four decades, died suddenly Monday, Jan. 26. He was 77.

Leahy was a member of the UO's Institute of Theoretical Science. He arrived at the UO in 1966 to begin what would be a long career of teaching and research before retiring to emeritus status in 2003. But he continued to be active in mathematics research up until the time of his death.

"He was a lovely person — full of stories, interested in everything, incredibly supportive of grad students and junior mathematicians," said Hal Sadofsky, math professor and associate dean for natural sciences in the College of Arts and Sciences. "Our world is a little worse for not having John in it, but much better for having had him in it."

Leahy had wide mathematical interests. He worked in singularity theory, algebraic geometry, differential geometry, algebraic topology and at the time of his death was working in logic.

Over the course of his career he collaborated with many other mathematicians, at the UO and elsewhere. Sadofsky said the long list of collaborators is a testament to the breadth of Leahy's interests.

Leahy mentored 16 doctoral students, the most recent in 2006. Colleagues said working with students was a central part of his career and his life.

He had lots of students and kept in close touch with all of them," said fellow UO math professor Peter Gilkey. "And I know he was important in their lives both personally and professionally."

In addition to his work on campus, Leahy was active in the UO's Bend programs for a time. He and his wife, Jane, also spent time in Mexico, where he had a faculty appointment at the Universidad de Guadalajara and helped develop the mathematics program there.

Leahy received his doctoral degree from the University of Pennsylvania in 1965, studying under Murray Gerstenhaber. His background was in algebra, but his later interests extended into many other fields.

"John was curious, open-minded and humane," Sadofsky said. "He loved our field and continued to enjoy thinking and talking about mathematics. He was welcoming to young people in the field and went far out of his way to mentor and help graduate students."

No local memorial is planned, but Jenny Leahy Allen, Leahy's daughter, said in an email that her father was deeply connected to the university and his students. He will be laid to rest with a remembrance of that tie.

"Dad gave his life to the U of O and his students, many I remember well or have heard of in great detail," she wrote. "He was so proud of his students and colleagues and his love of the U of O. He will be cremated with a U of O banner that was with him through the end."

—By Greg Bolt, *Public Affairs Communications*