

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

*Regents Communication*

ACTION REQUEST

**Subject:** Report of Faculty Death

**Action Requested:** Adoption of Memorial Statement

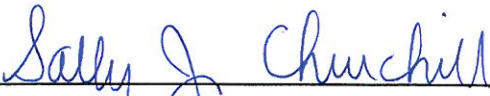
The Regents of the University of Michigan acknowledge with profound sadness the death of **John H. Holland, Ph.D.**, professor of psychology in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, and professor of electrical engineering and computer science in the College of Engineering. Professor Holland died on August 9, 2015.

Professor Holland received his B.S. (1950) degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and his M.A. (1954) and Ph.D. (1959) degrees from the University of Michigan. He joined the University of Michigan faculty as a lecturer in 1959, and was promoted to assistant professor in 1961, associate professor in 1964, and professor in 1967.

A remarkably interdisciplinary scholar, Professor Holland made significant contributions to the fields of artificial intelligence, psychology, linguistics, neuroscience, and philosophy. He was one of the premier co-founders of the Cognitive Science Program (now the Weinberg Institute for Cognitive Science) and the Center for the Study of Complex Systems. Professor Holland's book *Adaptation in Complex Adaptive Systems* (1975) applied fundamental ideas from biology to help define the nascent field of adaptive computation. In it he introduced the world to genetic algorithms and learning classifier systems: two powerful now-standard tools of adaptive computation that his research had constructed out of whole cloth. The ideas developed therein produced an enormous impact still resounding across disciplines including computer science, economics, and psychology. Later in his career Professor Holland made further concentrated efforts to help define and promote the field of complex systems by speaking internationally, helping to build institutes devoted to complexity in China and Singapore, and writing books for broader academic and public audiences, including *Hidden Order: How Adaptation Builds Complexity* (1995), *Emergence: From Chaos to Order* (1998), *Signals and Boundaries* (2012), and *Complexity: A Very Short Introduction* (2014). Professor Holland was notable for his passion in all his endeavors, his energy, his love of ideas, his deep cross-disciplinary knowledge, and his generosity. Stephanie Forrest, a student of Holland's, wrote: "He leaves us not only with a grand intellectual legacy, but with memories of the pure joy he brought to his research, cheerful disregard of academic dogma, and a great sense of fun and mischievousness."

As we mourn the loss of our beloved colleague, we extend our heartfelt condolences to his many loving relatives and friends.

**Requested by:**



---

**Sally J. Churchill, J.D.**

**Vice President and Secretary of the University**

**December 2015**