Manley Elliot Banks II, Ph.D., associate professor of political science, dies at age 56

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Manley Elliot Banks, II, Ph.D., associate professor of political science in Virginia Commonwealth University's L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs, died Friday, Aug. 21, following a lengthy bout with cancer. He was 56.

Banks joined VCU on Jan. 1, 1987, and taught courses in city politics, United States government, political attitudes of black Americans, voting rights issues, urban economic development policies and issues of democracy.

Wilder School Interim Director Deborah Brock, Ph.D., remembered Banks in a letter to faculty as a dedicated teacher.

"Dr. Banks was a valuable member of the community and a respected scholar. He was devoted to students and teaching – teaching his last course this summer," Brock wrote.

Banks served as an Honor Code Coordinator for the College of Humanities and Sciences, where he adjudicated cases involving violations of VCU's honors code. He was a member of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists and Minority Scholars Concerned about Voting Rights Issues.

Banks received his bachelor's degree from Morehouse College in Atlanta and his master's and doctoral degrees from the University of Texas.
Herbert Hirsch, Ph.D., professor of political science, met Banks at the University of Texas, where Banks was a teaching assistant in Hirsch’s “Intro to American Government” course. After Hirsch joined the faculty at VCU, he worked to bring Banks to the university.

“Since I knew what a committed teacher he was and since he taught urban politics, I was convinced he would be a perfect faculty member for VCU and I was correct,” Hirsch said. “Dr. Banks was one of, if not the most, committed and dedicated teachers I have ever met. He was concerned about the students and dedicated his time and effort to teaching and advising. Students repaid his commitment with their affection to Dr. Banks,” Hirsch said.

Their professional relationship and personal friendship grew as the years passed.

“Dr. Banks was a committed scholar and his interest and knowledge about United States politics was a constant source of stimulation and fun for me. Since his office is right next door to mine we would spend hours discussing the good and bad and the absurd of U.S. politics and government,” Hirsch said. “Dr. Banks could make you laugh and at the same time bring forth the most important points about what was going on in government. I will miss him not only as a colleague but a longtime friend.”

Nelson Wikstrom, Ph.D., professor of Political Science and Public Administration, is another longtime friend and colleague.

"Elliot Banks was a dedicated and thoughtful scholar who was well liked and highly regarded in the Wilder School and across campus. His loss represents a real void at the school and for me personally," Wikstrom said.

Banks is survived by his wife, Donna, and their 4-year-old son, Micah. Funeral arrangements are incomplete, but a memorial service is planned at Quioccasin Baptist Church.

A Richmond Times-Dispatch story about Banks can be found here.