

# Sandy D'Alemberte, a pillar of FSU with a brilliant legal mind, dies at 85

Byron Dobson, Tallahassee Democrat

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Sandy D'Alemberte died Monday at age 85. (Photo: Glenn Beil/Tallahassee Democrat)

Talbot "Sandy" D'Alemberte, former president of Florida State University and dean of its College of Law, died suddenly Monday afternoon.

D'Alemberte is considered one of Florida's most iconic leaders and a legal scholar whose influence was international.

D'Alemberte was president of Florida State University from 1994 to 2003. Prior to his presidency he was dean of the College of Law.

Throughout his tenure as president he was dedicated to academic excellence and research, intellectual freedom, diversity, heritage and historic preservation, support for the arts and culture, championship

athletics, civic responsibility and service, international programs and campus beautification.

He was known for his integrity, broad vision and human warmth, his FSU bio reads.

"He lived a life of that few people really have," said FSU President John Thrasher, who confirmed the news. "He left a huge impression and legacy on the university and on social aspects of our society and certainly our state. He was a man who when he spoke people listened whether you agreed with him or not people listened."

D'Alemberte was born in 1933 in his family home just west of the Florida Capitol, the same house where his grandmother and mother were born. He would later serve in that Capitol as a member of the House of Representatives from 1966 to 1972.

He was dean of the FSU College of Law from 1984 to 1989 and was a professor there for much of his long law career. A former President of the American Bar Association from 1991 to 1992, he became president of Florida State University in 1994 and led the university until 2003.

During his time as president, in 2000, the FSU College of Medicine was established as the first new medical school in the nation in more than 20 years.

Former Florida Senator Bob Graham remembers D'Alemberte as a gentleman, who treated everybody with respect and dignity.

"It's such a torrent of things that remind our present Floridians and those in the future about Sandy D'Alemberte," Graham told the Tallahassee Democrat. "He talked in soft southern accent and spoke from his head and his heart – if he had an angry bone in

his body he was never open about it to the public."

"He left behind some of the most important public policies in our state. Maybe the one that he is best known for is the writing of the judicial article back when the Florida Constitution was under consideration," Graham continued. "It's now been almost a half century since he did that and relatively few significant changes have been made to that article since Sandy wrote it. "

One of his best friends Steve Uhlfelder, who served on the Florida Constitution Revision Commission with D'Alemberte in 1978, said he will be missed and never replaced.

"There is no person who has been a better public servant than Sandy. I was so proud to have been his friend and to have worked with him and for him," Uhlfelder wrote on Facebook. "He was a national treasure. He always saw the best in others and treated everyone with respect. They don't make them any better than him. God bless him and his family."



Nancy Daniels poses with former president of the American Bar Association Sandy D'Alemberte at her retirement party at the Women's Club Dec 12. (Photo: Hali Tauxe/Democrat)

Uhlfelder said D'Alemberte's wife, Patsy Palmer, told him in an email D'Alemberte recently had knee surgery at the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville and he had been in rehabilitation.

They were returning to Tallahassee Monday afternoon when D'Alemberte took ill, having suffered from low blood pressure.

Emergency responders tried for 45 minutes to revive him, but were unsuccessful.

"No Floridian has been a better public servant than Sandy," Uhlfelder said. "He served his profession as American Bar Association president, he served his state as a member of the House and chair of Constitution Revision Commission, he served FSU as president and dean of the Law School – and still taught there – and he served so many others as a compassionate and dedicated lawyer. There was no cause too small or big for Sandy. He was a national treasure, who will never be replaced."

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FSU President John Thrasher, left, and former FSU President and College of Law Dean Sandy D'Alemberte pose with D'Alemberte Statue at its new home at the College of Law on Sunday, Nov. 18, 2018. (Photo: Byron Dobson/Democrat)