Greg Dees, Rubenstein Senior Fellow in Social Entrepreneurship

We are deeply saddened that our dear friend and colleague, Greg Dees, passed away on Friday, December 20, 2013. Greg was considered by many to be the “father of social entrepreneurship education.” He was instrumental in founding and developing social entrepreneurship as an academic field, through his work at Duke, Stanford, Harvard and beyond. When he began, “social entrepreneurship” was a new and novel term. Now, a Google search reveals more than 65 million hits, and Dees’s seminal piece, “The Meaning of Social Entrepreneurship” is one of the most widely distributed pieces in the field. His full bio follows.

J. Gregory Dees, recognized as a leading scholar in social entrepreneurship, took the reins of the Duke Innovation and Entrepreneurship Initiative’s social entrepreneurship pillar May 1, 2013. He was clinical professor at the Fuqua School of Business, where he co-founded the Center for the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship, and he previously taught at Stanford, Harvard and Yale universities. In 2007, the Aspen Institute and Ashoka recognized his pioneering work with their first Lifetime Achievement Award in social entrepreneurship education.

Greg has published extensively, including two books with Jed Emerson and Peter Economy, “Enterprising Nonprofits” and “Strategic Tools for Social Entrepreneurs,” along with some 60 articles, cases and classroom notes. Before coming to Duke in 2001, he cofounded the Center for Social Innovation at Stanford’s Graduate School of Business. Previously, at Harvard Business School, he helped launch the Initiative on Social Enterprise, and in 1995 received Harvard’s Apgar Award for Innovation in Teaching. While at Harvard, Greg took leave to work in Appalachia with the Mountain Association for Community Economic Development in Berea, Ky. Following time with McKinsey & Company as a strategy consultant, Greg’s academic career started at the Yale School of Management, where he developed a highly regarded course on new venture creation.

Greg has chaired the World Economic Forum’s Global Agenda Councils on social entrepreneurship and on social innovation. He serves on the board of trustees and external Knowledge Advisory Council for the Bridgespan Group and is on advisory boards for numerous organizations, including Volans, REDF, Business Leadership for Tomorrow, the Limmat Foundation and Root Alliance. He serves on editorial boards for the Social Enterprise Journal and the Journal of Social Entrepreneurship. His research focuses on strategies for scaling the impact of social innovations, business models for social entrepreneurs and how societies can better capture the benefits of social entrepreneurship. He is working on a book, tentatively titled “The Innovative Adaptive Society: Harnessing the Power of Entrepreneurs to Solve Social Problems.”

Greg completed a doctorate at Johns Hopkins University and owns master’s degrees from Yale and Johns Hopkins, as well as a bachelor’s degree from the University of Cincinnati.