

# Space Dynamics Lab Founder, Engineering Professor Emeritus Passes Away

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News Release — May 4, 2022 — Recently retired Utah State University engineering professor and Space Dynamics Laboratory Founder Doran Baker passed away on Tuesday, May 3.

Baker retired from the university last June after 62 years of service. His work in electrical engineering helped put Utah State on the map as a hub for space research.

Early in his career, Baker helped establish the Electro-Dynamics Laboratory at Utah State. In 1970, The University of Utah's Upper Air Research Laboratory — where Baker's brother Kay was a leader — moved to USU. These two labs later merged to become the Space Dynamics Laboratory.



*USU Professor Emeritus Doran Baker died on May 3, 2022. He will be remembered as a passionate educator and one of the founders of the world-renowned Space Dynamics Laboratory.*

Baker's early vision of space research at USU would guide SDL into becoming a national asset. Today the lab employs more than 1,000 people and has brought a wealth of high-paying engineering jobs to Cache Valley.

"Doran was a giant in education, research, and industry. He was a builder of students, researchers, and institutions who remained humble and kind notwithstanding his many accomplishments," said Jed Hancock, president of SDL. "Doran leaves behind a legacy that permeates throughout SDL, even today. The mission-focused culture of SDL,

where employees come first, is a foundation he left all of us to build upon."

Baker's influence extends beyond USU. He worked for seven different firms in the commercial sector and for two federal agencies. He developed systems engineering and space instrumentation courses for NASA and led or participated in numerous expeditions to remotely sense terrestrial, atmospheric optical, and microwave emissions using aeronautical and space vehicles.

Baker and his research team developed some of the most advanced spectrometric and radiometric imaging sensors for measurements of optical and infrared emissions. He received numerous accolades for his research efforts, including the Wynne D. Thorne Career Research Award, the College of Engineering's Outstanding Faculty Researcher Award, and the Utah Governor's Medal for Science and Technology.

Baker also served in a number of leadership roles within the College of Engineering, including as head of the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering and as faculty advisor to the USU student chapter of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers.

He is most revered for his dedication to teaching and mentoring. End-of-semester teaching evaluations dating back to the 1980s paint Baker as an energetic and passionate teacher who cared deeply about his students.

"The main theme that comes through in all of these comments is that students could tell how much he cared about them," said Jacob Gunther, professor and head of the Electrical and Computer Engineering Department. "Since I joined USU in 2000, Doran has been an example and a mentor to me. The influence for good that he's had on me has been repeated thousands of times in the lives of other faculty, staff, and students in the ECE Department, the workforce at SDL, and beyond."

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