

## University of Massachusetts community reacts to death of renowned scientist and professor Lynn Margulis

Published: Wednesday, November 23, 2011, 11:49 AM

Updated: Wednesday, November 23, 2011, 12:53 PM



**Diane Lederman, The Republican**

By

AMHERST - Internationally renowned evolutionary biologist and Distinguished University Professor Lynn Margulis died Tuesday at her home here. She was 73.

**Margulis** joined the University of Massachusetts faculty in 1988 after teaching at Boston University for 22 years.

She wrote hundreds of **research papers and many books**, including "Symbiotic Planet: A New Look at Evolution" and "Acquiring Genomes: A Theory of the Origin of the Species."

Her death surprised her colleagues who said that Margulis was healthy and rode her bike to work almost everyday.

"She was a wonderful colleague and a close friend. She was always stimulating; she always had a new idea, some new connection she had seen and she couldn't wait to tell you about what it was," said Steve Goodwin, Dean of the College of Natural Resources and the Environment. For example, Goodwin said, Margulis had recently discovered a new organism at Puffer's Pond and wanted to talk about.

"She had an incredible memory. She would make connections to things you'd marvel at," Goodwin added. "Her enthusiasm for science was infectious."

R. Mark Leckie, geosciences department head, said, "She was a very a dynamic colleague a huge inspiration to her students. She was a very collegial faculty member she was a pleasant person to have as colleague."



The Republican | File photo

Lynn Margulis delivers a lecture in 2002.

Margulis taught a class in environmental evolution for 38 years.

"She loved teaching, it was really her passion," Leckie said. "She introduced her students to lectures and interviews with many "famous scientists. She was able to bring some of those connections to her students."

Leckie described Margulis' impact on the field of biology as "huge."



File photo

President William J. Clinton awards Lynn Margulis the 1999 National Medal of Science in a ceremony at the White House.

Her work, though, was not without controversy. She was a skeptic of neo-Darwinian evolution, and admitted in a **recent interview in Discover magazine** that many of her criticisms of neo-Darwinism are the same as those made by proponents of intelligent design. However, she said, she was not a proponent of intelligent design.

Goodwin said Margulis, in her research, would "take the theory of evolutionary biology and see how far she could push it."

In a **statement issued Wednesday**, Chancellor Robert C. Holub called her death "a great loss for the entire campus family."

"She leaves us a legacy of academic accomplishment brought about by her original thought and tireless inquiry into multiple field of science that look at how the world functions and how that magnificent world has developed over time," Holub said.

Margulis also wanted the layperson to understand science and wrote the "Luminous Fish: Tales of Science and Love" to help.

The book featured four fictional tales and her account of her encounter as a young woman with J. Robert Oppenheimer, a theoretical physicist who helped develop the atomic bomb.

"I quit my job as a wife twice. It's not humanly possible to be a good wife, a good mother, and a first-class scientist," wrote Margulis, who was once married to astronomer Carl Sagan.

Margulis was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 1983 and received the National Medal of Science from President Bill Clinton in 1999.

She was also a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (AAAS) and the World Academy of Art and Science, an elected foreign member of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences, and a fellow of the Massachusetts Academy of Sciences, according to a UMass press release.