



In Loving Memory of Richard A. Bettis (1947–2025)

With great sadness, we announce the passing of Richard A. Bettis, a distinguished scholar, mentor, and leader, as well as a devoted husband, father, and grandfather. Rich passed away peacefully on January 22, 2025, in Nashville, TN, at the age of 77, after an extended illness.

A Life of Curiosity and Achievement

Born on November 22, 1947, in Portsmouth, Ohio, Rich's early life was shaped by curiosity, intellect, and determination. The son of Sara L. Bettis and Charles F. Bettis, he was the first in his family to attend college, a milestone that marked the beginning of an extraordinary academic and professional journey.

His passion for learning led him to Ohio State University, where he earned a degree in Engineering Physics. Following a five-year career as an engineer at General Motors, his intellectual curiosity drew him to business research. He pursued an MBA and later a Ph.D. in Business Policy at the University of Michigan, where he formed a lifelong friendship and research collaboration with C.K. Prahalad, resulting in influential contributions to the field of strategic management, including their seminal work on dominant logic, which won the inaugural SMJ Dan and Mary Lou Schendel Best Paper Prize in 1993.

A Legacy of Scholarship and Leadership

Rich dedicated over three decades of his career to the Kenan-Flagler Business School at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he held a Chair in Strategy and Entrepreneurship. He was a prolific and influential scholar whose research spanned corporate strategy, behavioral strategy, and empirical rigor in strategic management research.

Beyond his research, Rich played a pivotal role in editorial leadership, serving as Co-Editor or Associate Editor for leading management journals for over 30 years, including *Management Science* (1987-1991), *Academy of Management Review* (1990-1993), and *Strategic Management Journal* (Associate Editor 1995-2006; Co-Editor 2007-2016).

His leadership extended to professional societies. As a Founding Member of the Strategic Management Society (SMS), he served on the SMS Board of Governors (1999–2008), was Program Chair of the 2001 SMS Annual Meeting in San Francisco, and held the roles of

President-Elect (2002–2003) and President (2004–2006). In 2016, he was recognized for his lifetime contributions with the SMS Distinguished Service Award.

Within the Academy of Management, Rich served as Chair-Elect and Chair of the Business Policy/Planning Division (1986–1989) and as a Board of Governors member (1989–1992).

A Mentor, a Friend, and a Man of Integrity

Beyond his scholarship and leadership, Rich Bettis was a mentor, teacher, and guide. He had an unparalleled dedication to his doctoral students and junior colleagues. His ability to challenge, inspire, and uplift those around him left an indelible mark on the academic community.

Rich was faithful to Christ and to His church. He lived with unwavering integrity, honor, and generosity. His compassion and kindness extended to anyone in need, and he was a tireless advocate for those facing hardship.

He was deeply knowledgeable about many subjects and was knowledgeable enough of most others that he knew what he believed and could easily support his beliefs. These included a love for and vast interest in history, from which sprang his deep sense of patriotism for the sacrifices made for our freedom as Americans. He *loved to think* and to engage in conceptual discussions. He was superbly disciplined and managed his time well despite a plethora of projects and responsibilities, prioritizing physical fitness and especially time for his family. He had a quick and delightful sense of humor. He was humble—never proud or boastful—except about his family and his students. He will be sorely missed, but we are all better for his influence on us and the standard he set.

A Life of Love and Family

Rich's life was deeply enriched by his love for his family. He is survived by his loving wife Debbie of Chapel Hill, NC; son Matthew (Pam, and children Connor and Anna) Bettis, of Atlanta, GA; daughter Kimberly (and son Joshua) Bettis, of Nashville, TN; 'adopted' daughter Songcui Hu, of Tuscon, AZ; and brother James Bettis, of Atlanta, GA.

A Lasting Legacy

Rich's passing is an immense loss, but his legacy will continue through the work of those he mentored, the ideas he championed, and the kindness and generosity he shared. He will be dearly missed by his family, friends, colleagues, and the strategic management community.

A memorial service will be held on Saturday, March 15, at 10:00 AM at [Chapel Hill Bible Church](#). In lieu of flowers, you may honor Rich by contributing to [The Rich Bettis PhD Memorial Fund](#).

Rest in peace, Professor Bettis—a brilliant scholar, a dedicated mentor, and a loving husband, father, and grandfather.