

Michael R. Tansey was born in Oakland, California, and moved from place to place as the child of an Air Force officer, including Texas, Virginia, Germany, and England. He started an undergraduate degree in Russian, thinking that he might follow in his father's footsteps. He ended up switching to degree in Biology after being inspired by a course that showed him that "you could spend your whole life" studying nature. Mike joined the IU faculty in the Department of Biology in 1971 soon after receiving his Ph.D. in Botany from the University of California, Berkeley. His early work focused on thermophilic (heat loving) fungi, involving their identification and temperature limits in various habitats. Intriguingly, one of the hot fungal habitats he studied was alligator nests, which provide heat via decomposition of the nesting material.

Mike is first and foremost an educator. By the time he retires in the spring of 2017 after 46 years here at IU, he will have taught over 22,000 students. He has not sacrificed quality for quantity. On the contrary, he has been the recipient of 12 teaching awards. These range from awards at the national level (Weston Award for Excellence in Teaching, from the Mycological Society of America), to awards at the university level (Teaching Excellence Award [3-time winner], Trustee's Teaching award [4-time winner], and the Holland Award), to awards at the departmental level. In this latter category, he received an award in 1994 and 2016, whose title epitomizes Mike's modus operandi: the "*Senior Class Award for Teaching Excellence and Dedication to Undergraduates.*" He has taught a variety of courses from the introductory level to the graduate level, but the two that he is best known for are his lecture and lab courses on fungi. As Chair of the Teaching Committee for the Mycological Society of America, he produced a nationally distributed poster on "What can you do with training in Mycology." The poster lists over 150 vocations, including "Bioremediation Expert", "Brewmaster", and "Biochemist." Mike's two Fungi courses are usually fully enrolled, with a wait list for the lab course. You actually may have noticed him on campus without knowing who he is – he's the guy who goes around collecting various mushrooms and other material for his courses.

Mike's knowledge of fungi has served him well in his research and teaching, but it has also contributed to his substantial service and outreach contributions. For example, he works with IU's Environmental Health & Safety office in identifying toxic mold sites. He also works with the community, solving mold problems, providing mushroom identifications, and giving talks. He has led nature hikes, discussed household molds and mushrooms with journalists for their articles, acted as a "poisoning consultant," helped libraries with moldy-book problems, and reported on fungi in nature preserves to the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. Here are two lines from Mike's CV: "Mushroom Poisoning Contact: May 13 Dog. Lived" and "IUB Greenhouses, a 'strange growth' is on the floor bed. I examined this: a harmless slime mold plasmodium."

An affiliation with IU has been a family affair. Mike's wife Janica, who he met in the mid 1980s, worked at IU in the Office of the Registrar and she helped Mike out with various service activities. She passed away in 2008. His daughter Sarah received a degree in Psychology from IU and his son Rowan (named after a tree that in mythology prevents travelers from getting lost) received a degree from the Kelley School of Business. Rowan lives in Bloomington and is currently a staff member in the Department of Biology.

While his service and outreach activities are legendary, including his commitment to supervising independent study and majors, one in particular stands out for me. In 1998, I took

over as Associate Chair in the department. I agreed to take on this position because coincident with this change-of-the-guard, the Chair agreed to establish an Ombudsperson position, whose job it would be to hear and solve grievances from students and faculty about courses. Mike agreed to take this job, and following some training, he has served as Ombudsperson for the Department of Biology for over 18 years. This is not an easy job. It involves calmly and sympathetically – but at the same time dispassionately – listening and providing good advice for students who have serious complaints about their classes, their professors, the Biology Department, and the university. It requires a steady head, a thoughtful nature, and the ability to call it like it is. I hesitate to say exactly how many cases he has heard (Biology has a large number of majors...), but suffice it to say that I am not sure how we will get along without him. Those are important shoes to fill.

Following retirement Mike plans to remain in Bloomington and continue his volunteer work with a social-services organization. So if you run into Mike, feel free to stop and ask him any questions you might have about fungi. He'll know the answer.

Lynda Delph, 2016 (for 2017 retirement)