Charles Bestor, Professor Emeritus of Composition, died in January, 2016 at the age of 91.

Under his leadership as Head of the Department of Music and Dance from 1977-1986 and 1987-1988, there was a period of growth and success that helped sustain the Department through the lean budget years that followed. Dr. Bestor was an astute and skilled administrator who was extremely personable and cared deeply about his faculty and the University. He gave the Department new energy, direction, and a sense of purpose. Keenly sensitive to nurturing the reputation of UMass for artistic excellence in musical performance, he was also active on the Research Council of the Faculty Senate, where he was Chair for a term, and a tireless advocate for parity in funding creative activity along with research. An exemplary administrator, he was very involved with professional associations such as the National Association of Schools of Music (he was on the Commission for multiple terms) and the National Association of Music Executives in State Universities.

Dr. Bestor studied with Paul Hindemith at Yale University, Vincent Persichetti and Peter Menin at the Juilliard School, and independently, with Vladimir Ussachevsky. He held degrees from Swarthmore College (Phi Beta Kappa), the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and a PhD from the University of Colorado at Boulder. Bestor was acting manager of the Juilliard Orchestra, faculty member at the University of Colorado at Boulder, Dean of the music school at Willamette University, and headed music departments at the University of Alabama and the University of Utah.

He received commissions from the Utah Symphony and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, and composed numerous works during his stays at the Yaddo, MacDowell, and Ragdale artist colonies. The CD set of his music, The Summing Up on the Albany Records label, features UMass faculty performers who so often have performed his music through the years.
Bestor collaborated on art installation pieces: *Pathways* from the *Dream Spell Series*, installed at the Chicago International Art Expo at Navy Pier; *Cycles and Time* and the *River's Flow*, commissioned by the Maier Museum of American Art; *Into the Labyrinth*, commissioned by the Fine Arts Center of the Virginia Museum in Lynchburg; and *The Unfound Door*, commissioned by the College Music Society.

The family will hold a public memorial in the Fall of 2016 to honor Charles’ life and legacy.

Donations in his memory may be made to the Ann Elder Bestor Memorial Scholarship in Music and sent to Jessica Usher, College of Humanities and Fine Arts, UMass Amherst, 104 Dickinson Hall, 155 Hicks Way, Amherst, MA 01002.

To see the Douglass Funeral Home obituary with an option to sign the memorial guestbook, [click here](#).