



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 father, who passed away peacefully on January 22, 2025, surrounded by his beloved wife, Debbie Bettis.

Born on November 22, 1947, in Portsmouth, Ohio, Rich's early life was shaped by curiosity, intellect, and determination. The son of Sarah 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.

Rich pursued his undergraduate studies at Ohio State University, majoring in Engineering Physics, before embarking on an early career at General Motors. However, his passion for intellectual exploration led him to pursue an MBA and later a Ph.D. in Business Policy at the University of Michigan. It was there that 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 was a tireless servant to the academic community. He played a significant role in editorial leadership, serving as Co-Editor or Associated Editor for multiple leading management journals, including *Management Science* (1987-1991), *Academy of Management Review* (1990-1993), and *Strategic Management Journal* (1995-2016) for over 35 years.

His leadership extended to professional societies, where he profoundly shaped the field. 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), influencing the field's direction at its highest levels.

A Mentor and Friend

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, shaping the careers of many who have since become leading scholars in top research institutions worldwide. His ability to challenge, inspire, and uplift those around him left an indelible mark on the academic community.

His legacy is not only in his published research and leadership roles but also in the countless lives he touched—students, colleagues, and friends who were fortunate enough to learn from his wisdom, humor, and unwavering support.

A Life of Love and Family

Rich's life was deeply enriched by his love for his family. He met his wife, Debbie, at a friend's wedding in 1972, and they built a beautiful life together, anchored in love, faith, and commitment. Together, they raised two children: Matthew Bettis (born 1981), now a manager in Atlanta, and Kimberly Bettis (born 1985), now a registered nurse in Nashville. Rich was also a proud grandfather and cherished his time with his three grandchildren.

Rich and Debbie were lifelong members of the United Methodist Church, and their faith provided them with strength, guidance, and community throughout their lives.

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 entire strategic management community. A memorial service will be held in early March 2025, with details to be shared soon. [Please check back next week for updates.]

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