

This lectureship was established to honor two internationally known scientists who headed the Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology during key periods of its history.

Dr. B. Connor Johnson, who gave our department its current name – Biochemistry & Molecular Biology – was born in Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada, earned the BS & MS degrees at McMaster University, and the Ph.D. degree at the University of Wisconsin. During his years as a postdoc, Asst., Assoc. & Full Professor at the University of Illinois, his work on vitamin B12, vitamin K, and Vitamin A brought international acclaim and many honors; and in 1965 he was recruited to come to Oklahoma to the medical school and the OMRF. Dr. Johnson was Head of the Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology from **1965 through 1979**, and continued in an interim-emeritus capacity until **1981**. During his first six years as Dept. Head, he was also Member and Head of the Biochemistry Section of the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation, the only scientist to Head departments in these two sister institutions simultaneously. During his tenure as Head of our department, Dr. Johnson hired 12 new faculty and strengthened the department greatly. Dr. Johnson was Professor Emeritus of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology as well as OMRF's first Distinguished Career Scientist, from 1982 until his death on April 3, 2002. During his amazing career as a research scientist which spanned more than 6 decades, Dr. Johnson published more than 300 scientific papers, gave an equal number of presentations worldwide, and mentored 48 Ph.D. students and an equal number of postdoctoral fellows, many of whom now head departments and laboratories of their own. Connor, as he was known to most of us, was truly a citizen of the world, a gentleman as well as a scientist, possibly one of the last truly "renaissance men," whose interests knew no bounds. For the last two decades of his life, he was interested in research on aging and was fascinated with how caloric restriction prolongs lifespan and leads to changes in gene expression. This was the subject of his last scientific presentation in 2001, at the age of 90, less than one year before his death.

Dr. John R. (Jack) Sokatch, also an internationally known scientist, served as Chairman of the Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology from **1984 through 1992**, picking up the reins just three years after Dr. Johnson stepped down. Dr. Sokatch provided the leadership and creative energy necessary to help the department enter a new phase of growth in research and teaching. He was responsible for hiring 4 new faculty in 1985 (who are now part of the senior "anchor" of Professors and Associate Professors of the department), for establishing the first Endowed Chair in Molecular Biology, and for integral work involved in establishing the \$8.7 million Center of Excellence in Molecular Medicine. Dr. Sokatch earned the Ph.D. in bacteriology at the University of Illinois and joined the faculty in Microbiology at the University of Oklahoma College of Medicine in 1958. He received a Research Career Development Award from NIH in 1962, was a Fulbright Senior Research Scholar in 1963-64, and was promoted to Full Professor of Microbiology in 1967. Dr. Sokatch also served as Associate Dean of the Graduate College from 1971-77 and Associate Director of Research Administration from 1973-77. It was Dr. Sokatch who chaired the planning committee that designed and provided oversight for the construction of the Biomedical Sciences Building (known as BMSB), the home of all the basic science departments of the College of Medicine. Dr. Sokatch was named George Lynn Cross Research Professor in 1983, was a Member of NIH Study Sections from 1980-84 and 1989-93. He maintained continuous NIH research funding for 38 years, from 1959-1991. Dr. Sokatch's internationally recognized research on the function and regulation of enzymes of amino acid metabolism as well as his wealth of administrative experience made him a "good fit" to head the Department of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology. The department continues to reap the benefits of programs Dr. Sokatch initiated during his 8 years as Chair.

We are honored by the service of these two fine men and are happy to recognize their contributions through this lectureship that is established in their honor.