



Dear ESPP Students, Alumni, and Friends,

We write with great sadness to share that Professor Michael (Mike) McElroy passed away last week at the age of 86. A pioneering atmospheric scientist and a central figure in the development of Earth and environmental science at Harvard, Mike's leadership, scholarship, and generosity shaped ESPP and the broader University for decades.

Mike joined Harvard in 1970. His research ranged from planetary atmospheres to ozone depletion, climate change, and, in later years, energy and decarbonization in the United States, China, India, and beyond. His work helped inform major international environmental agreements, including the 1987 Montreal Protocol to protect the earth from the negative impacts of ozone loss from the upper atmosphere. In 2024, he received the American Geophysical Union's highest honor, the William Bowie Medal.

At Harvard Mike was instrumental in building the institutions that now define our environmental community. He was a founding member of the ESPP concentration in 1993, served as Head Tutor, and was a member of the ESPP faculty board since its inception. He chaired the University-wide Committee on the Environment and was the first faculty director of the Harvard University Center for the Environment. He also founded the Harvard-China Project on Energy, Economy, and Environment, fostering a network of scholars at the intersection of science, policy, and society.

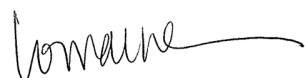
In ESPP Mike was a beloved and constant presence—a teacher, advisor, mentor and colleague whose influence shaped the program from its earliest days. In addition to serving as both a concentration and thesis advisor, Mike taught many of ESPP’s key courses. He co-taught the very first ESPP junior seminar with William Clark and continued to offer junior seminars for decades. He also taught introductory courses in environmental science; Science A-30 The Atmosphere in the Core Curriculum, EPS 5 Introduction to Environmental Science: Atmosphere, Oceans, and Biosphere, and, more recently, the Gen Ed course GE 1137 The Challenge of Human-Induced Climate Change: Transitioning to a Post-Fossil Fuel Future. In the classroom, in advising meetings, and in countless informal conversations, he was a guiding, steady force: generous with his time, deeply interested in students’ ideas and trajectories, and always encouraging them to connect scientific insight with real-world policy and public service. Above all, he was unwavering in his commitment to students. We can honor Mike’s memory by carrying forward the work he cared about so deeply and by sustaining the community of inquiry, collaboration, and public purpose that he helped to build.

He is survived by his wife, Veronica, and their children, Brenda and Stephen. We will share information about memorial services as it becomes available and plan to create a space on the ESPP website where members of our community can offer remembrances.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Moorcroft", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Paul Moorcroft, Head Tutor
Professor of Organismic and Evolutionary Biology

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lorraine Maffeo", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Lorraine Maffeo
Program Administrator