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Kruskal, 85, helped introduce statistical methods to public policy issues

William Kruskal, an authority on theoretical statistics who helped the U.S. government bring statistical methods to bear on public policy issues, died of pneumonia Thursday, April 21, at Bernard Mitchell Hospital in Chicago. He was 85.

Kruskal, the Ernest DeWitt Burton Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus in Statistics, the Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies and the College, also had co-devised a technique that was incorporated into every major statistical package in use today.

President Richard Nixon appointed Kruskal to his Presidential Commission on Federal Statistics in 1970. The 15-member commission conducted a comprehensive review of the compilation and uses of statistics by the federal government, the first such review that had taken place in 20 years. Kruskal subsequently became the first chairman of the National Research Council's Committee on National Statistics, a position he held from 1971 to 1978. The committee was charged with evaluating statistical issues for the U.S. government, including citizens' attitudes and behavior toward the census.

Along with W. Allen Wallis, the founding Chairman of Chicago's Statistics Department, Kruskal devised the Kruskal-Wallis test. "The test is found today under that name as part of every major statistical computation system," said Stephen Stigler, the Ernest DeWitt Burton Distinguished Service Professor in Statistics and the College.

"The Kruskal-Wallis test was able to examine a set of data from several groups of subjects and test for potential differences among the groups," Stigler said.

With another Chicago colleague, Leo Goodman, the Charles Hutchinson Distinguished Service Professor in Statistics and the College, Kruskal co-authored a series of classic papers that brought a new sophistication to measuring the association between a pair of qualitative attributes—hair color and eye color, for example—that might occur in a given population.

Kruskal's wide-ranging interdisciplinary research and leadership reached across three academic divisions at the University over the decades. He was a founding faculty member of the Department of Statistics in the Physical Sciences Division and served as department Chairman from 1966 to 1973.

Kruskal further served the University as Dean of the Social Sciences Division from 1974 to 1984, and as Interim Dean of the newly established Irving B. Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies from 1988 to 1989.

"He was a man utterly committed to the highest standards of academic excellence," said Hanna Gray, President Emerita and the Harry Pratt Judson Distinguished Service Professor Emerita in History and the College.

"The division certainly thrived, as it has ever since in the quality and creativity of its faculty."

Kruskal was born Oct. 10, 1919, in New York City. He received his A.B. in mathematics and philosophy with honors in 1940. He then received his master's degree in mathematics from Harvard University in 1941 and his Ph.D. in mathematical statistics from Columbia University in 1955.

Kruskal joined the Chicago faculty as an Instructor in Statistics in 1950. Kruskal was named the Ernest DeWitt Burton Distinguished Service Professor in Statistics in 1973, and became Professor Emeritus in 1990.

He was president of the Institute of Mathematical Statistics in 1971, and of the American Statistical Association in 1982. He was co-editor of the *International Encyclopedia of Statistics* in 1978.

Kruskal was elected a fellow of the Institute of Mathematical Statistics, the American Statistical Association, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Kruskal is survived by three sons, a sister, two brothers and five grandchildren. The Kruskal family is establishing a memorial fund to benefit the University. Gifts in memory of Kruskal should be sent to Priscilla Yu, Office of Development, University of Chicago, 5801 S. Ellis Ave., Admin. 407, Chicago, Ill., 60637.
