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# Brandl's career blend enriched Minnesota

● State needs more such professor-politicians.

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John Brandl, the former Humphrey Institute dean who died Monday, seemed mystified whenever someone remarked on the rare blend of academic and applied political science that was his career.

To him, it was natural to move from lecture hall to legislative chamber to the doorsteps of the south Minneapolis legislative district he represented for 12 years. Natural, exhilarating and all of a piece: It was all about serving humanity through better government. He often urged his fellow politicians to let scholarly research inform public policy, and advised his fellow academicians to consider running for office.

Brandl's desire to serve shone through his career choices, but also through the warmth, integrity and humility of the man himself. He was a master at disagreeing without becoming disagreeable, and at teaching without demeaning his pupils. As a result, his pupils included governors, legislators, professors, journalists — and readers of this newspaper. His byline appeared on these pages 79 times in the past 21 years.

While Brandl was held in high personal regard, his ideas weren't eagerly embraced by either party. A DFLer, Brandl favored market-driven and community approaches to government action wherever research had shown them to be effective. His advocacy of voucher-based funding of public education rankled many in his own party. But his insistence that government's work is too crucial to be done on the cheap kept him at odds with the state's Republican leaders.

Brandl's response to his critics was that of the patient, kind-

**BY JOHN BRANDL**

Here are excerpts from two columns Brandl wrote for these pages:

"Republicans know that government appropriations are inherently less productive than private spending. Taxes have become more and more burdensome over the years.

"Democrats know that state government spending has been reduced drastically... There is no practical way of improving public services without spending more.

"Academic research has established that every claim in each of the previous two paragraphs is false."

JAN. 9, 2005

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"This year's legislative session came down to a tussle between the two dominant sets of interest groups at the Capitol: those for whom raising taxes one cent is anathema and those who believe that spending on government services automatically accomplishes fine results. No one in either the executive or the legislative branch of government took a public stance that both those silly positions are silly."

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ly professor. He'd wait for another teachable moment, then press his case for competition- or community-based public work once more. He's gone too soon. Fortunately, his ideas will survive him.