



**UNIVERSITY OF GUAM
UNIBETSEDAT GUÅHAN
Board of Regents**

Resolution No. 25-19

RELATIVE TO COMMEMORATING THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF †LIEUTENANT COLONEL (RETIRED) DAVID WILLITS SWANSON, UNITED STATES ARMY, AS THE FIRST PROFESSOR OF MILITARY SCIENCE AND THE HISTORICAL ARCHITECT TO ESTABLISH THE FIRST OPERATIONAL SENIOR DIVISION UNIT OF THE UNITED STATES ARMY RESERVE OFFICERS' TRAINING CORPS PROGRAM AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GUAM

WHEREAS, the University of Guam (UOG) is the primary U.S. Land Grant and Sea Grant institution accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges Senior College and University Commission serving the post-secondary needs of the people of Guam and the Western Pacific region;

WHEREAS, the governance and well-being of UOG is vested in the Board of Regents (BOR);

WHEREAS, the Army Senior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) Unit was agreed upon and approved by the Secretary of the Army, effective March 1, 1979, and signed by then UOG President Dr. Rosa Roberto Carter and Lieutenant Colonel James P. Hunt, General Staff, Chief Procurement and Accessions Branch;

WHEREAS, †Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Retired (Ret) David Willits Swanson was a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point with the Class of 1958, earning his commission as a Second Lieutenant of Infantry. His military career assignments included multiple tours in Vietnam such as with the 101st Airborne Division; 13 months in Korea with the First Air Cavalry Division; two years at Fort Benning, Georgia; a tour as an aide to a two-star general; a Master of Arts graduate degree in Speech Communications and Human Relations from the University of Kansas; and assignments at the right staff colleges, headquarters and bases, including serving at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He served as Assistant Professor of Military Science and was subsequently appointed Professor of Military Science (PMS) at the University of Hawaii Army ROTC Program. He was selected and became the first PMS of the UOG Army ROTC program. †LTC (Ret) David Willits Swanson concluded his career at Fort Sheridan, Illinois;

WHEREAS, because of his personal and professional efforts, †LTC (Ret) David Willits Swanson was the historical architect in establishing and maintaining the first operational senior division unit of the Army ROTC program at UOG on March 1, 1979. The first Army ROTC semester classes started in Fall 1980 at Dean's Circle. From 1979-1983, he and his cadre were pioneers and plank holders, founding members whose presence and service from the very beginning laid the foundation for all who would follow in molding a highly successful program. They would produce future commissioned Army officers from Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI) for military service on active duty, with the Army Reserves, or with the Guam Army National Guard. He spearheaded a team that instilled a warrior ethos and established an environment for cadets to have a balance between their academics and ROTC activities. Although his tenure on Guam ended in 1983, his span of influence directly touched ROTC Year Group classes of 1982, 1983, 1984, and 1985. As cited in Vol 129, Congressional Record of the 98th Congress, dated November 18, 1983, by then-Congressman Antonio B. Won Pat (extract): "...Lt Col David W. Swanson, who assumed the job of professor of military science...During his years on Guam he forged the basis for the high quality we see today in our

local unit and certainly developed a wonderful sense of duty which continues to pervade the entire cadet corps and faculty.”;

WHEREAS, because of his energizing leadership qualities to motivate and develop future military leaders, his efforts resulted in the May 1982 commissioning of the first class of Military Science IV cadets from the UOG Army ROTC program, held concurrently with the University’s Thirtieth Commencement Exercises at Orote Point Theater, Naval Station. †LTC (Ret) David Willits Swanson was responsible for collaborating with the University to have the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, the Honorable Harry N. Walters, deliver the UOG commencement address and be available for the presentation of commissions. †LTC (Ret) David Willits Swanson’s exceptional leadership would also be the guiding force for that fledgling program to win several outstanding achievement awards, including the prestigious “Warrior of the Pacific Award” with the Class of 1984 in only its third year as a program. This trophy is a national award presented to the top Army ROTC unit in the country. His visionary style is credited with bringing unparalleled military recognition to the proud people and community of Guam and the CNMI;

WHEREAS, as a result of his outstanding contributions, †LTC (Ret) David Willits Swanson was a trail blazer and a trend setter. He cultivated a foundation with philosophy, practices, and institutional means on Guam to produce generations of senior ranking Army leaders, including General Officers. At the time of his passing, the University’s 46-year-old Army ROTC Program commissioned over 625 Second Lieutenants since 1982;

WHEREAS, †LTC (Ret) David Willits Swanson’s exemplary leadership style inspired generations of senior civilian leaders able to give back to their community by drawing upon their Army ROTC military leadership training and education. He instilled values of family, service and teamwork which resulted in personally changing the lives of many individuals for the better. He paved the way for many to become Army officers by opening doors of great opportunity to serve in higher levels of military responsibility in staff and command positions. It also resulted in improved standards of living and quality of life. He fostered camaraderie and created opportunities that enriched lives, nurtured success, and strengthened the community of Guam;

WHEREAS, because of his personal leadership qualities and role as a mentor, †LTC (Ret) David Willits Swanson helped cultivate an energizing and positive climate to achieve success and life-long national service. That is, to inspire, motivate, and prepare future leaders to seek future challenges and roles of greater responsibility. He understood this island’s patriotic culture and the importance of family, often visiting with cadets’ families to give them assurance and encourage enrollment;

WHEREAS, †LTC (Ret) David Willits Swanson (aka “Dave”, “Pop” or “Swanee”) was born and grew up in Galesburg, Illinois on November 29, 1936, a second-generation Swede and the second son of Evar and Sara Swanson whose family ran a grocery store in Galesburg. He was married to †Sharon Ruth Swanson and was father to four children: Shawn Marie Bogen, Stephen Evar Swanson, David Erik Swanson, and †Susannah Swanson. He also was grandfather to ten grandchildren and four great grandchildren. He passed away peacefully surrounded by family on August 11, 2025 at the age of 88;

WHEREAS, †LTC (Ret) David Willits Swanson’s distinguished military service and wounds he sustained in Vietnam stand as a lasting testament to his bravery and courage in combat as an infantryman, thereby contributing to the nation’s defense and enriching the fabric of American history. He was the honored recipient of the Silver Star (the nation’s third highest military decoration for valor in combat), 2 Bronze Stars (recognizing his heroic service in combat), a Purple Heart (solemn recognition of his wounds sustained in combat), 7 Air Medals (for heroism while

engaged in aerial flight), 3 Meritorious Service Medals, 4 Army Commendation Medals, a Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal with 60 Device, Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm, 2 National Defense Service Medals, and 3 Overseas Service Awards. He further distinguished himself by earning the Ranger Tab, Combat Infantry Badge (CIB), Expert Infantryman Badge (EIB) (an award he coveted more than the CIB), and Senior Parachutist Badge;

WHEREAS, his personal acts of heroism and bravery resulted in many lives saved in the Vietnam War. Going above and beyond the call of duty to accomplish his mission while also preserving his fighting force set an example for others to emulate and follow. In one heroic account while assigned as a rifle-company commander with Alpha Company, First Battalion, Seventh Cavalry, his company was ordered into the An Lao Valley in South Vietnam in 1966. While South Vietnamese marines swept up the valley, Alpha Company and other American units set up ambushes and blocked the avenues of exit out of the valley. Then-Captain (CPT) Swanson maneuvered his platoons from one position to another to flush out the enemy. Alpha Company made considerable contact under intense fire. When word reached battalion headquarters that Alpha Company had killed a North Vietnamese, the command sent a photographer to get a photograph of the corpse. The unit then went back to search for badly injured soldiers. CPT Swanson's battalion commander picked him up in a helicopter and they flew over the combat zone, calling in gunfire. CPT Swanson ordered the chopper to put him down on the ground so he could rejoin his men. Under intense fire, Swanson witnessed three of his men killed. Later that afternoon, CPT Swanson and his First Sergeant reached their fallen soldiers. As they lifted one soldier to carry to friendly lines, they were struck by enemy fire. His First Sergeant suffered a serious chest wound. CPT Swanson took a bullet round that pierced his helmet striking the back of his head knocking him out. When he regained consciousness, he saw two fingers of his left hand had been shot off with a bullet striking his left arm. He rendered first aid to his First Sergeant and ordered his evacuation. He stuck what remained of his fingers into his first aid pouch and continued to call in supporting fire. He refused to leave his fighting position until the situation was under control. He remained in the fight until he was pulled back for medical evacuation to a field hospital for 30 days. He lost both of his fingers from that fierce firefight but kept his bullet-ridden helmet as a solemn reminder of sacrifice and survival on that fateful day, a testament to courage and a symbol of resilience, a sacred relic of the price paid in defense of freedom, and a reminder that the cost of service is etched not only on flesh and bone, but also in the objects that survive alongside the warrior that carried them;

WHEREAS, †LTC (Ret) David Willits Swanson engaged in a range of interests and hobbies that fulfilled his zest for life. He was an avid reader, loved studying Military and American History, listened to old and new jazz music, collected American memorabilia such as baseball cards, coins and stamps, enjoyed golfing, and visited with West Point classmates, childhood friends and his family. He was actively involved in the Rotary Club, especially in Guam. He epitomized personal and professional excellence and lifelong learning that he embraced as both a "soldier for life" and "student for life";

WHEREAS, †LTC (Ret) David Willits Swanson is honored and commended for his extraordinary service to our nation and, most especially, to Guam and the CNMI. We render our fond and final salute to a larger-than-life Soldier, who, no matter the distance or circumstance, devoted his life - with blood, sweat, and tears - to duty, honor, and country. Our drumbeat of gratitude resounds for a warrior who gave so much and enriched the lives of many by making a positive difference. His fighting spirit endures in the hearts and minds of the military professionals he served with, past and present, and the next generation of Army leaders. Through his mentorship and legacy, countless men and women now serve with distinction in Guam and around the world. As the bugle sounds Taps in solemn farewell, we mark the completion of a warfighter's journey - a job well done by a faithful servant and devoted family man. His memory is, and will remain, a blessing; and

WHEREAS, the Academic, Personnel, & Tenure Committee has reviewed the recommendation and recommends approval of this resolution commemorating the life and legacy of †LTC (R) David Willits Swanson to the BOR.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the BOR, UOG administration, faculty, staff, students, and Army ROTC program convey our gratitude to the family of †LTC (Ret) David Willits Swanson for his extraordinary service to our nation and as the first PMS of the UOG Army ROTC Program, producing a legacy of quality Army officers and leaders who serve with distinction on Guam, in the region, and the world; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be sent to †LTC (Ret) David Willits Swanson's family; to the UOG Army ROTC Program PMS; the United States Army Cadet Command, 8th Brigade Commander; the College of Natural and Applied Sciences Dean; the Governor of Guam; and the Speaker and members of the thirty-eighth (38th) Guam Legislature.

Adopted this 25th day of September, 2025.



Agapito "Pete" A. Diaz, Chairperson

ATTESTED:



Anita Borja Enriquez, D.B.A., Executive Secretary