Professor Emeritus James Jeffries Eyster Jr. was born March 28, 1941 and died Tuesday, April 7, 2015 at the age of 74. A Cornell University faculty member from 1972 - 1999, Professor Eyster is credited with creating an entirely new area of study – with his exploration and analysis of hotel management contracts – then writing the authoritative book on the subject. His death elicited an outpouring of support from his colleagues at the University, his former students, and the large circle of friends and acquaintances that he developed during his productive life.

Professor Eyster is survived by his beloved wife of 50 years, Susan Brown Eyster; their children, Jennifer Bradley and husband, James, of Virginia, William James Eyster and wife, Norri, of Australia; granddaughter, Grace Elizabeth Bradley of VA; sister, Louise Pileri and husband, Graziano, of NJ; sister in law, Helena C. Brown and husband Russell Warne of ME; a large extended family; as well as his faithful canine companion, Coconino.

Dr. Eyster was a professor at the Cornell Hotel School for 27 years. His love of teaching was paramount in his career. His connection with his students continued many years after he retired. One of Jim’s most special moments was his nomination by a former student to carry the Olympic Torch in Seneca Falls N.Y. as part of the 2002 Olympics. Jim taught courses in financial management and real estate. He followed politics closely and was very concerned about the social and political injustices of the world as well as with human pain and suffering. To make a difference, he courageously initiated the course entitled Housing and Feeding the Homeless, which was well received by students, but contentious with his colleagues. He received a Chaired Professorship, the HVS Professor of Hotel Finance and Real Estate and became a Professor Emeritus at the Hotel School upon his retirement. His Ph.D. centered on a study of hotel management contracts and evolved into worldwide consulting work, and he was sought after by many of the leading hotel owners and management companies. His book, ”The Negotiation and Administration of Hotel and Restaurant Management Contracts,” has become the go-to book for the industry. His consulting work lead to a longstanding relationship with the United States National Park Service, which held a special place in Professor Eyster’s heart. He loved nature and the outdoors. He served as the chair for ten years of the National Park Service’s Concessions Management Advisory Board.
Jan A. de Roos ’78 who co-authored with Eyster on the fourth edition of “The Negotiation and Administration of Hotel Management Contracts,” calls Eyster “the intellectual father of hospitality real estate.” De Roos, SHA associate professor and the HVS Professor of Hotel Finance and Real Estate, who was an SHA freshman the same year Eyster became a “freshman” faculty member, said, “Jim Eyster was known for his warmth and integrity,” adding, “He always took the high ground.”

One of Professor Eyster’s long standing colleagues, Professor Emeritus Neal Geller says: “The best thing I can say for Jim’s memorial statement is that he was a consummate Cornellian—as a student, graduate student, and faculty member. As a faculty member, he was demanding yet caring for his students. Their love for him showed. As a colleague, he was caring, supportive, and wonderful to work with. As a friend, he was caring, concerned, and incredibly reliable. I will miss him greatly.”

Another long-term colleague, Professor Emeritus Michael Redlin says: “I remember Jim as a principled and caring man. He lived his principles throughout his life by such activities as being a Boy Scout leader to his son, Jamie, and other young men and creating at SHA the innovative course “Housing and Feeding the Homeless.” This course was renowned for applying the tenets of hospitality to a nationally important cause. He cared about his students because he knew the importance of them having significant impacts on their generation. He maintained an extensive and active network of past students with whom he shared his wisdom and passion for life. He will be missed by many spread far and wide around the world.”

Professor Eyster grew up in Narberth, Pennsylvania, attended Lower Merion High School, Dickenson College, University of Pennsylvania, and received his Ph.D. from Cornell University. In 1963 he served as a Second Lieutenant in Company A of the First Engineer Battalion, Fort Riley, Kansas. Jim was a wonderful father, husband, and great friend. He was a great role model and inspiration to many people including students, friends, and family. Spending time with children, his granddaughter, wife and other family members gave him great pleasure. Involvement in his men's writing group and meeting one-on-one with dear friends meant a great deal to him. He was an avid reader with a book list requested by many. He enjoyed being involved with many activities such as driving for Gadabout, working with Loaves and Fishes, as a Boy Scout Leader and Eagle Scout, volunteering at The Friendship Donation Network and Louis Gossett Jr. Residential Center, birding, sailing with his son, taking walks with his wife, and having long talks with his daughter.

Jan A. deRoos, chair; A. Neal Geller, Michael H. Redlin, Glenn Withiam