

TO: John Jay College Community

FROM: Keisha Pottinger-Moore, Director of Human Resources Operations

DATE: February 6, 2024

RE: Passing of Robert Francis Sermier

---



Robert Francis Sermier passed away on December 4, 2023. He served as the Chief Financial Officer John Jay from 1986 to 2001. He also taught in our Master of Public Administration program since 1990. He also served as a Master of Public Administration Program Student Advisor. In addition to his professional life at John Jay, he served on the Board of the Harcourt Foundation until the time of his death.

Robert Francis Sermier was born in Saugerties, NY, to Francis Sermier and Henriette Carrieu Sermier on April 22, 1943. He died on December 4, 2023, in New York City. He is survived by his wife of 38 years, Martha Ackerman Sermier, his brother, Edward Sermier and his family. He is also survived by the Indhur Mandhyan family and the extended Ackerman family.

He graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis and served in Admiral Rickover's nuclear submarine program. He then received his MBA from Harvard Business School and began his career in public service at the Department of Health, Education and Welfare in Washington DC and continued at the Human Resource Agency in NYC. Robert then became Chief Financial Officer at John Jay.

He was an advocate for equity in funding of CUNY campuses. He explained “If access at the City University means anything, it does not mean just getting in. It means when you get in, you'll get the same chance to succeed in life. That each student has about the same amount of support available to him or her. That was our argument. It was based on justice.”

In a narrative he wrote for the Harvard Business School in 1997 he described his teaching at John Jay. “In the few treasured hours a week in which I am in the classroom, I try to pass on what the [Harvard Business] School and my experiences have given me. Even after 7 years of teaching, it remains quite terrifying to be on the other side of a case studies classroom. Sometimes when I look out upon the students in a class, I see in their eyes all of us, and myself, 25 years ago. It has been nearly a full circle-- I can't wait to being going around again for the next 25 years, wherever that may lead!”