

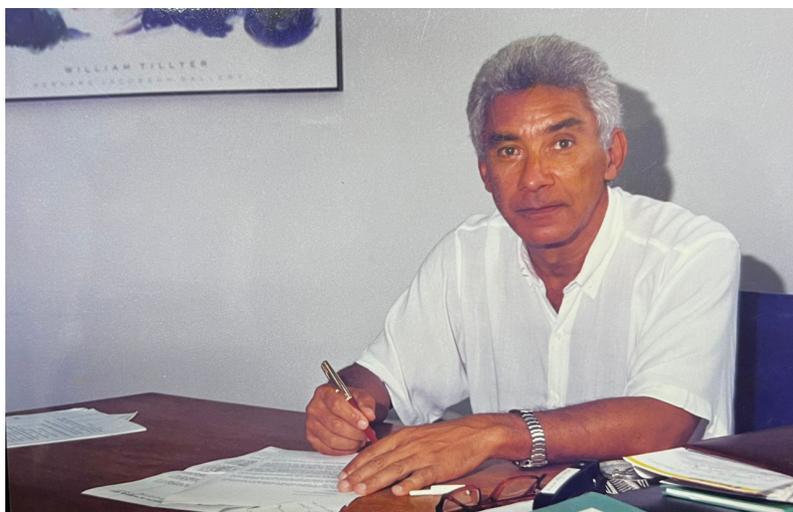


Emeritus Professor Ailton de Souza Gomes

We are all in grief because our dear Professor Ailton de Souza Gomes has passed away last December (12/24/2021). He was a reference in Polymer teaching and research in Brazil and renowned internationally. In 1968, he obtained his PhD in Chemistry from the University of Pennsylvania. Soon afterwards, he was invited to participate in a bilateral program between the National Academy of Science (NAS) and CNPq, called at that time National Research Council, for developing postgraduate teaching in chemistry in Brazil. Thus, he carried out a post-doctorate in the research group of Professor Charles G. Overberger, whose focus was the field of Polymer. Back in Brazil, Professor Ailton undoubtedly participated in the creation of the Institute of Macromolecules. By bringing his experience in this area to the recently created “Grupo de Polímeros” and having worked intensively at the Chemistry Institute of Federal University of Rio de Janeiro UFRJ since 1970 as a professor, he contributed to the consolidation and development of the Group which, in 1972, became the Macromolecular Nucleus and later, in 1976, “Instituto de Macromoléculas”. In the following year, he completed his Post-Doctorate at the Imperial College of Science and Technology as a fellow of the British Council. In 1978, he took up the position of coordinator of the Post-Graduate Course in Science and Technology of Polymers which was created in 1977. During his management, he organized the syllabus of the Postgraduate Course disciplines, which characterizes its interdisciplinarity and justifies its name which intended to bridge Polymer Science and Technology.

Throughout his professional career, he trained more than a generation of professors and researchers who are scattered all over the country, in federal and state universities, in research centers (CENPES), research institutes (INPI, INT) and industries. The 27 doctoral students he supervised are examples of leadership and professionalism in their respective academic fields. Many have reached outstanding positions as Professors, namely José Augusto Marcondes Agnelli (DEMA/UFSCAR), Juan Carlos Rueda Sanchez (PUC/Peru), Leni Akcelrud (UFPR), Raquel Santos Mauler (IQ/UFRGS), Suzana Lieberman (UFRGS), and the late Professor Fernanda Margarida Barbosa Coutinho (IMA/UFRJ and UERJ).

In addition to his interest in the field of polymers, he had always been a visionary and an innovative researcher, working on current and cutting-edge research fields. Being a tireless researcher he carried out investigation on nanostructured polymeric materials, nanocomposites for prolonged drug release and membranes for use in fuel cells and nanostructured polymeric materials. In addition to working in the academic field, he also had professional experience in the industry. Thus, between 1972 and 1976, as a Petroleum Chemist at PETROBRAS, he participated in the installation of the Polymer Laboratories at the company’s Research Center (CENPES). It involved everything from the organization of the laboratory and research line guidelines up to the specification and purchase of equipment. In 1977, he created the Postgraduate Program in Science and Technology of Polymers, which awarded the highest rating at CAPES since



2013. Additionally, during this period, he was also involved in strategic research projects for PETROQUISA. In one of them, he was the direct supervisor of the development of Ziegler-Natta catalysts for isoprene polymerization. Even on unpaid leave, he continued to assist his students in carrying out the research they had been developing until the completion of their graduate works.

In 1987, he returned from unpaid leave and was transferred to the Instituto de Química at UFRJ. On this occasion, in order to increase the partnership between the private sector and the public university, he held, on a part-time basis, the position of Petroleum manager, of the recently opened Ultra Group Research Center (Mauá/SP). He acted as a researcher and consultant in other projects, always aiming to contribute to the scientific and technological development of the country. In 1992 he returned to IMA and in 1994 he became a Full Professor therein. He was elected Director of this Institute in 1995 and served at the institution for twelve years. He created the Lato Sensu Post-Graduate Course in Plastics and Rubbers in 2000. His well-known competence was demonstrated by the activities he had carried out and recognized through honors, titles and awards, such as:

- Teaching Fellowship – University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia/PA (USA), 1966;
- Associate Researcher – The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor/MI (USA), 1969;
- Member of CNPq/NAS – Program of Postgraduate Research and Teaching in Chemistry in Brazil, from 1969 to 1976;
- Visiting Professor, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland/OH (USA), 1989;
- Queen’s Fellowship – Scholarship of Queen Elizabeth II, of England, for post-doctoral studies, 1977;
- Eloisa Mano Award from the Brazilian Polymer Association, ABPol, 2007.

In addition to his academic and technical activities, he also acted as advisor and consultant to government agencies CNPq, CAPES, FAPESP, FAPERJ, among others; as a member of the Editorial Board of the Polímeros – Ciência

e Tecnologia journal (since 1991); as an editorial consultant for the international journals such as: Journal of Applied Polymer Science, Polymer International, Journal of Membrane Science, Electrochimica Acta; as editor of Macromolecular Symposia (n. 245-246), in 2006 and representative of Brazil in the Polymers Division of IUPAC (2006-2008).

Considering his participation in administrative positions, since 1993 he was Director of the largest polymer association in Brazil - Associação Brasileira de Polímeros, ABPol, and later his President (1995-1997), participating in the activities of the Association either in the organization of the III Brazilian Congress of Polymers, in Rio de Janeiro (1995) or in the creation of the Southeast Regional and later the South Regional.

Professor Ailton also participated in the organizing committee of the I, II, III and IV Polymer Seminars (SEMPOL), held in 1978, 80, 82 and 84, respectively. He was responsible for coordinating the V Brazilian Polymer Congress, in Águas de Lindóia / SP (1999), and coordinator of the organizing committees of the IV Latin American Polymer Symposium, in Gramado / RS (1994); World Polymer Congress – MACRO 2006/41st International Symposium on Macromolecules, in Rio de Janeiro/RJ (2006). He was the representative of Brazil in the coordination of SLAP 2008, held in Lima, Peru and Macro 2012 at Virginia Tech, in the United States. He was part of the organizing committee of the European Polymer Federation EPF 2013, held in Pisa, Italy in June 2013.

His entrepreneurial character and professional experience in the industry brought innovations to the University, generating new horizons for research, contributing significantly to the scientific community in Brazil and abroad.

To conclude may I emphasize how important and participative his family was, in the person of his wife Teresa and his four children, who stood by his side, supporting him through his long and brilliant academic career until the moment he left us.

Maria Inês Bruno Tavares

Director, Instituto de Macromoléculas Professora Eloisa Mano, Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro – UFRJ, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brasil