When Dr. Daniel A. Okun, Kenan Distinguished University Professor Emeritus of environmental engineering, retired from the UNC School of Public Health in 1982, the department he chaired for almost two decades was several times bigger than the one he joined in the 1950s. Under Okun’s leadership, the Department of Environmental Sciences and Engineering’s narrow focus on a program in sanitary engineering had expanded to a comprehensive, interdisciplinary environmental sciences and engineering program—now ranked among the country’s top 10, according to U.S. News & World Report.

Even in retirement, Okun continues to add value to UNC. “Dan has a history of giving to the university,” says Dr. Michael D. Aitken, chair of the Department of Environmental Sciences and Engineering. “He’s been a consistent donor to our department for many years.”

Okun’s contributions have funded a range of development efforts, from student scholarships to the construction of buildings and facilities. This year, Okun gave a gift to the Department of Environmental Sciences and Engineering to name the department’s chair’s suite in Rosenau Hall.

“The opportunity to directly associate the suite with Okun is a significant honor for the department,” Aitken says.

In 2007, the Department of Biostatistics endowed the Department of Environmental Sciences and Engineering Professor with the History of Giving. The professor’s duties include instruction and research in environmental engineering.

With the suite named in Okun’s honor, the Department of Environmental Sciences and Engineering continues to attract new students and funding opportunities. The department has expanded to include research in areas such as environmental policy, climate change, and sustainability.

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For more information about giving to the Department of Environmental Sciences and Engineering, please visit our website at environmental.unc.edu.

— By Margarita De Pano