Be it resolved that the Arts and Science Council deeply regrets the passing of Joseph Boyle, Professor Emeritus of Philosophy and former Principal of St. Michael’s College.

Joseph Boyle was born in Philadelphia on 30 July 1942. Growing up in a Catholic family, he began his higher education at St. Charles Seminary, Philadelphia, where he developed his life-long passion for both philosophy and for integrating his interests in ideas with his commitments to his faith. He later transferred to LaSalle College (now LaSalle University), where he completed his B.A in 1965. In 1970 he received his PhD from Georgetown University, where he wrote his dissertation, “The Argument from Self-Referential Consistency: the Current Discussion”, under the supervision of Germain Grisez, with whom he would later entertain a fruitful collaboration and publish some important work on natural law theory.

For almost two decades Joe taught at a succession of small Catholic colleges in the United States, doing important work in applied ethics, including euthanasia and nuclear deterrence, until in 1986-87 he was brought to the University of St. Michael’s College as the first McCorkell-Sullivan Visiting Professor. In 1987, his move to the University of Toronto’s Department of Philosophy alongside his College appointment became permanent. Four years later, he became Principal of St. Michael’s College, a role in which he served until 2002. He has also been interim and acting chair of the Department of Philosophy. In 2013, Joe became a Professor Emeritus yet even after this date he remained actively involved in the Department, teaching advanced bioethics courses and leading a philosophy of religion reading group.

Joe Boyle’s research interests were in ethics, including ethical theory and applied ethics (including bioethics) as well as natural law theory. His philosophical work was crucial for the renaissance of the so-called principle of double effect in contemporary ethics, and he developed, together with Grisez and John Finnis, a now very prominent approach to natural law. During his career he published approximately 100 articles, four co-authored books, and one co-edited book. His publication record, and in particular the fact that all his books are co-authored, are witness to his belief that philosophy is best done in active and argumentative engagement and collaboration with others. His achievements as a scholar also brought him wide recognition in the field, including election as President of the American Catholic Philosophical Association in 1989.

During his tenure as Principal and Vice-President, Academic at St. Michael’s, from 1991-2002, Joe expanded College personnel, strengthened the Office of the College Registrar, provided increased math and writing support for students, introduced a St. Michael’s-specific edition of Arts and Science’s 199 course, and more broadly presided over a mutually respectful and productive relationship between the Federated University he led academically, and the broader University of Toronto. Moreover, he was an exemplar of a religiously-
serious scholar and teacher committed to a confident, honest, and full engagement of any and all meaningful questions. He loved the Church, fully believed in collegiality and intellectual openness, and lived out these commitments most every day with a distinctive combination of humility and good (and often wicked) humour.

Colleagues, staff, and students remember Joe for his generosity, sincerity, keen analytical skills, good spirits, and his profundo voice. He leaves behind his wife Barbara, four children (Marion, Thomas, Deirdre, and Mary Anne) and many grandchildren.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be inscribed in the minutes of Arts and Science Council.