Blazing a trail into the 21st century

Mac professor, chemist, inventor, entrepreneur, philanthropist — Richard Tomlinson, OC (1924-2018) blazed a remarkable trail across higher education and scientific research.

In 1950, Tomlinson joined McMaster’s department of chemistry, where he taught for close to four decades. Named professor emeritus in 1988, he then founded Gennum Corporation, which became the world’s largest producer of microchips for the hearing aid and video broadcast industries.

In the 1990s, when McMaster lost government funding for its nuclear reactor, Tomlinson persuaded the university to use the facility to produce Iodine-125, now used worldwide in the treatment of cancer.

A generous supporter of higher education in Canada, Tomlinson remembered McMaster in his estate plans with a charitable gift annuity, which has supported the Richard H. Tomlinson Gallery in the McMaster Museum of Art, as well as the 21st Century Fellows Fund.

When interviewed later in life, Tomlinson aptly summed up his legacy: “Education has been my whole life.”
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