Dr. White revolutionized the practice of environmental microbiology. His groundbreaking approaches and methods for studying microorganisms in their natural environments opened up the possibility of applying cutting edge analytical technology to microbial ecology. He applied his expertise to many areas, including deep subsurface microbiology, sewage microbiota, marine sediment communities in polar and temperate regions, and waterborne pathogens.

One of Dr. White’s greatest assets was his willingness to collaborate with other applied and environmental microbiologists, often spending more time helping others with their research than on his own projects. At the time of his passing, he was a Distinguished Professor in the Department of Microbiology, University of Tennessee-Knoxville, and Director of the Center for Biomarker Analysis.