

**MEMORIAL RESOLUTION OF THE FACULTY  
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON**

**ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITA DORIS PEYSER SLESINGER**

Doris P. Slesinger, professor emerita of rural sociology, died on October 1, 2006 in Madison, Wisconsin. She was 78 years old. She is survived by her husband, Professor Emeritus Edward Wellin, her three sons and daughters-in-law, and five grandchildren.

Doris earned her undergraduate degree in 1949 from Vassar College, her master's degree in 1960 in sociology and demography from the University of Michigan, and her PhD in sociology, with emphasis on demography and health, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1973. She joined the faculty of UW-Madison's Department of Rural Sociology in 1974, and retired in 1998. In retirement, she remained engaged in university affairs, including serving in the UW-Madison Faculty/Staff Ombuds Program.

Doris Slesinger's outstanding career as an applied sociologist built on the long-standing traditions of rural sociology. Her research and outreach activities concerned the health and well-being of minorities, including African Americans and Native Americans, women, migrant farm workers, and the rural poor. Her latest work, written with Howard Grigsby of UW-Whitewater and Karl Taeuber of UW-Madison and completed just a few months before her death, is a statistical overview of African-Americans in Wisconsin. Doris conducted significant research on the health and health care of migrant agricultural workers in Wisconsin, providing data used to support policy and legislative reforms. She served as a member of the Governor's Advisory Council on Migrant Labor from 1998 until her death.

Doris's interest in demography and health was a major resource for students interested in public health. She provided a unique combination of demographic expertise, medical sociology focus, and concern for applied research. She was a key resource for population-based health studies.

Doris authored or co-authored four books and nearly 100 articles and reports. Her "Women's Health Brochures" contributed to the expansion of public knowledge on health issues. Written in user-friendly prose in both English and Spanish, the brochures cover an array of topics on women's clinical health issues and are distributed throughout the country. Doris was active in UW-Extension work, not only through guiding and preparing the production of applied reports, but also organizing many workshops on applied population concerns, and consulting with other extension workers and the public.

Doris's service to the Rural Sociological Society included a long list of committees and activities. She served on its governing council from 1983 to 1987; she was elected vice president of the society in 1989. The Rural Sociological Society presented Doris with the Distinguished Rural Sociologist Award in 2002 for lifetime career achievements. Within the Population Association of America, she was instrumental in the creation and early survival of the Committee on Applied Demography in the late 1970s and 1980s. Today this is an extremely active group.

Doris was an active participant in the faculty governance of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. She served on the Social Studies Divisional Committee, the University Academic Planning Council, the Committee on Academic and Social Issues in the Student Environment, the Committee on Honorary Degrees, and on a number of committees within the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences. She became the first woman chair of a rural sociology department in the country in 1987, a position she held until 1991. She also led the department's Applied Population Laboratory as director or co-director from 1974 to 1987.

(continued)

Doris had students of both genders as advisees and assistants, but devoted special attention to working with, training, and mentoring women. Doris's attention to the cares, concerns, and intellectual nurturing of her students was truly special. There was always a strong bond of true affection and love between Doris and the many students she taught and the graduate students she advised over the years. Her concern and deep interest were not limited to students. She also mentored other women faculty members. For this she was doubly honored: the University of Wisconsin's Women Faculty Mentoring Program not only selected her as the first recipient of its mentoring award in 1998, but named it the Doris P. Slesinger Award for Excellence in Mentoring.

We conclude with some of the remarks made by Leann Tigges, chair of the Rural Sociology Department, at the Women Faculty Mentoring Program reception in November:

Doris was in the generation of women professors who were always breaking new ground. Academic women in the generations that followed have had a somewhat easier time because of the pioneers like Doris who forged the way, fought the early battles, and established the precedents. Doris actively and continuously tried to make our way easier by her service as an advisor and mentor to women graduate students and junior faculty. I've witnessed the love and loyalty felt by these women for Doris, and in the past months their pain at losing her has been palpable. Doris provided what many professional women sought: an advisor, a collaborator, a role model, a protector, a steady and sturdy shoulder. She was soft-spoken, but never unspoken. She was passionately concerned about fairness and justice, and she never forgot that people have many dimensions to their lives. She made sure that life transitions were marked and celebrated. Doris brought intelligence, honesty and humor to all her activities and relationships. We will miss her, but we are so glad she was here for us.

MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

Eleanor Cautley  
Glenn V. Fuguitt, chair  
Gene F. Summers  
Paul R. Voss