

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

ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS DONALD NEAL McISAAC JR.

Donald N. “Dinny” McIsaac Jr., professor emeritus of educational administration, died at his home in the town of Dunn on Monday, October 11, 2010 at the age of 73. He is survived by his wife, Linda and their daughter Megan and by his first wife, Marina, and their daughters, Tara and Shauna, three grandchildren, and one great-grandchild.

Donald “Dinny” McIsaac was born in Santa Monica, California, on February 25, 1937. After graduating from public high school, he attended Pomona College on a scholarship and graduated with a major in physics. After four years teaching in the Ontario (California) Unified School District, Dinny served as an assistant superintendent in the Claremont Unified School District and as a visiting lecturer of statistics at the Claremont Graduate School. He completed his PhD in educational administration from Claremont Graduate School in 1966 and joined the faculty of the Department of Educational Administration (now Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis) at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in the fall of 1966.

Professor McIsaac had an innovative and inventive professional career at UW. In addition to teaching statistics, research design and methods, and developing “cutting edge” courses in computer applications to management in education, Dinny was the first associate dean to serve as director of information systems in the School of Education where he led the school into the computer and information technology age. Later, as a principal investigator and director of computer-based research at the Wisconsin Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning (now the Wisconsin Center for Education Research), he developed management information systems for effective schools and school improvement. As an associate director of the Madison Academic Computing Center, Dinny was director of the UW Software Development and Distribution Center, which was a university-industry partnership that developed software products and made them available to industry through WARF. His passion for statistics, computers, and management information systems dramatically led schools and businesses to seek better information, cogent analysis, and improved performance.

While Professor McIsaac’s research, writing, and invention were prolific—ranging from programs to retrieve information from ERIC, the national education data base, to mapping analyses through trend surface analysis of social and educational data, and cluster analysis utilizing over 250 social and economic variables—it is notable that he was always focused on the use of statistics, data, and computers to address and solve “real world” problems in education and management and to improve organizational performance. Following his retirement from UW in 1995, Dinny and his wife, Linda, formed Xyte, Inc. to develop computer applications which included an analysis of independent voters leading up to the 2008 presidential election; improving military recruiter job selection by the Army and Navy; and explaining who watches CBS’s TV programs, why, and how to tailor the commercial. At the time of his death he was working on a project to improve school learning through compatible teacher-student personality combinations. Professor McIsaac was an embodiment of the Wisconsin Idea of making “connections to people, programs, policies, and practice.”

Throughout his professional career Dinny was enthusiastic about the nexus of research and ideas. As a colleague once remarked, “His playground was new ideas and new relationships, and his toys were statistics and computers.” It didn’t matter if the ideas came from the field, a fresh graduate student, reported research, or a senior professor; Dinny would spend the time necessary to explore the problem fully and design research. He would spend hours with ANY student on their research or with ANY practitioner to find a research-informed solution to education issues or management problems. Teaching through

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common inquiry and mentorship was Dinny's strength. In this regard he was mentor to hundreds of graduate students who became professors, school superintendents, principals and community leaders.

Even in death Dinny will continue to help others with the donation of his brain and technology that will help Alzheimer's patients and their families. Before he died he was a research subject himself by supplying data to the Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute here on the UW campus.

Finally, Don McIsaac will be most remembered as a friend and colleague. We knew him as a willing partner to new endeavor. We knew him as an accomplished pilot with a never-ending catalog of flying stories accompanied by great hyperbole. We knew him as possessing an infectious sense of humor with a storehouse of bad jokes. We knew him as an optimistic and positive person who always wanted everyone to be "superb" or "deluxe." Finally, we knew him as a colleague who contributed greatly to our department, our school, and our university. He will be missed.

MEMORIAL COMMITTEE

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