

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

**ON THE DEATH OF PROFESSOR EMERITUS WILLIAM AQUILINO**

For a dozen years, Professor Emeritus William “Bill” Aquilino lived with colon cancer. He lived with strength, grit, humor, happiness, gratitude, and when called for, surrender. He died on April 21, 2012.

Bill was born July 21, 1952, in Philadelphia. He completed his undergraduate degree in psychology at LaSalle College, and he later earned his PhD in human development and family studies at Penn State University. At Penn State, he also met the love of his life, Linda Thompson, who was later to become his beloved wife and professorial colleague in human development and family studies at UW-Madison.

Bill came to the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1988 as a post-doctoral trainee in aging and adult development in the Department of Sociology. From 1990 to 1992, he was an associate scientist at the UW-Madison Center for Demography and Ecology. In January 1993, Professor Aquilino joined the School of Human Ecology’s Department of Human Development and Family Studies as an assistant professor. In July 1995, Professor Aquilino was promoted to associate professor with tenure, and in 1999 he became a full professor. He retired in January 2009 due to renewed health challenges. During his tenure at the UW, Professor Aquilino held joint positions as an affiliated researcher with the UW Institute on Aging and the UW Center for Demography and Ecology.

Professor Aquilino’s scholarship made noteworthy contributions to the field in two general areas: 1) intergenerational relations, especially parent-adult child relationships and the transition to adulthood; and 2) improving survey research on the measurement of sensitive questions.

His innovative work on intergenerational relations and young adulthood helped to redefine this area of scholarship and brought national attention to the growing demographic trend for adult children to return “to the nest,” providing a much more complex picture of this phenomenon and its consequences for the quality of parent-child relationships than had previously been available. Professor Aquilino also examined the effect of disruptions in childhood family structure on the subsequent life course of young adults as well as the quality of later parent-adult child relationships. This body of work led to his emergence as one of the top scholars in young adulthood and intergenerational relationships.

During his career, Professor Aquilino was a significant member of the team that designed and implemented the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), considered the definitive longitudinal data set on American families. Professor Aquilino was closely involved in the survey’s design and data collection beginning when he was a study director at the Institute of Social Research at Temple University, prior to coming to the University of Wisconsin, and culminating with his contributions to the design of later waves of the NSFH.

The second major focus of Professor Aquilino’s scholarly work was the improvement of survey methodology, especially as it pertains to assessing sensitive personal information such as intimate details about family life, sexual behavior, or illicit drug use. His work also examined the potential biasing effects of different interview modes (face-to-face, telephone, self-administered) and how it can affect a respondent’s willingness to reveal sensitive information. One innovative aspect of this line of research was his examination of the then-emerging technology of computers as a method for collecting sensitive data and how such technology might help to increase data quality and the flexibility of design in interviews using a self-administered format. Professor Aquilino’s contributions to survey methodology were groundbreaking and led to the implementation of more sophisticated and accurate approaches to survey measurement. In

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support of his research program at the UW, Professor Aquilino was the recipient of several million dollars in federal funding as well as a Vilas Associates Award.

Professor Aquilino's teaching included undergraduate and graduate courses in lifespan development, parent-child relations, and research methodology. Over the course of his career at the UW, Professor Aquilino developed a reputation as an excellent teacher and popular advisor, mentoring many undergraduate and graduate students who have gone on to their own distinguished careers.

Professor Aquilino served in numerous leadership roles in the department, school, and university. From 1998 to 2002, he served as chair of the Department of Human Development and Family Studies. Among the highlights of his chairmanship were the development of the department's diversity plan (which served as a model to other programs), the growth in graduate student teaching assistantships, and guidance of the department through a challenging transitional period in the school's change in leadership.

Beginning in 2005, Professor Aquilino served two years as the interim director for the Center for Excellence in Family Studies, helping to draft a vision document to revitalize and revision the center. During his last three years as a full-time professor, Professor Aquilino ably served as the associate dean for graduate studies and research in the School of Human Ecology. In this role, he worked to increase graduate student funding, improve graduate student climate, develop common guidelines for the umbrella Human Ecology Graduate Program, and provide a vision for how the School of Human Ecology can better facilitate, support and attract funded research projects.

During his 16 years as faculty member in the Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Professor Aquilino was a highly productive scholar, a fine teacher and mentor, an exceptional leader, and a great colleague. He served the collective modestly, without bringing great attention to himself. He will be deeply missed by his colleagues, family, and friends. He is survived by his wife, Linda Thompson, and his daughter, Zoe Aquilino.

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