

## **Resolution on the retirement of Walter C. Swap**

Adopted by the Faculty of Arts, Sciences and Engineering

Today we consider the important contributions Professor Walter C. Swap has made to the Tufts community while also wishing him all of the best for the future.

Walt grew up in Alaska, but moved to the “lower 48” in 1961 to study at Harvard. He graduated from that institution *magna cum laude* in 1965 with a degree in Social Relations. Walt then went to graduate school at the University of Michigan. He also studied for one year at the London School of Economics before returning to Michigan. His graduate studies at the University of Michigan were supported by a prestigious graduate fellowship from the National Science Foundation and his doctoral research focused on the role of mere exposure to another person in attitude formation and change. After receiving his Ph.D. in 1970 Walt stayed on at Michigan for another year as a Lecturer in Psychology and Study Director at their Institute for Social Research.

In 1971, Walt returned to the Boston area, but this time to the top of the “hill” rather than to the institution in Cambridge, on which we can look down. At Tufts University Walt was appointed as an Assistant Professor of Psychology and his wife, Sue Swap, joined the faculty of the Department of Child Study. He arrived at Tufts eager to get his own research under way, but almost immediately the main Psychology building, North Hall, burned down. However, this was only a temporary setback, and soon he had an office and laboratory in the Research Building. This was not the most glorious space on campus but, while there, he was able to establish his research program in Social Psychology. He was also instrumental in getting a NIH training grant in Social and Developmental Psychology for our Department, and he helped train many graduate students who have gone on to have excellent careers themselves. Some of his former graduate students include: Joel Brockner, currently the Phillip Hettleman Professor of Business at Columbia; Professor John Eckenrode, Co-Director, Family Life Development Center at Cornell; and Elizabeth Ossoff, Professor and Chair of Psychology at St. Anselm College.

As a Social Psychologist, Walt published numerous articles on attitudes and interpersonal attraction. He also collaborated with the late Jeff Rubin on research into the assessment of interpersonal orientation. They also worked together on an important book chapter on small group theory and its application to international relations. His contributions in this area were greatly affected by Jeff Rubin’s tragic death in a hiking accident. In addition, his wife Sue, who for many years had been the Director of the Center on Families, Communities, Schools, and Children’s Learning at Wheelock College died of a brain tumor in 1995. Walt was obviously devastated by her untimely passing. A year or so later he met Dorothy Leonard, whose husband had died the same year as Sue, and they eventually married. In collaboration with Dorothy, Walt has turned his scholarly interests toward applying his background in social psychology to the analysis of the process and success in Entrepreneurship, and the development and sharing of expertise. Together they have published several books and articles and have another book in press.

In 1983, Walt became Chair of the Psychology Department. He approached this appointment with his usual dedication and organization. There were some in the Department who were worried that perhaps he was too nice a guy to be an effective chair. However, we soon realized that this was someone who could remain a nice guy but be tough and hard-nosed whenever it was necessary. Things got done, conflicts resolved, and the reputation of Psychology prospered while Walt was Chair. As he served, he learned more about the workings of the University and the role of Department Chair as he served. This knowledge and his desire to share information led him to write a pamphlet on how to be a good Chair that many of us still occasionally consult today. Of course no good deed goes unpunished and in 1990 he was asked to become the Dean of Undergraduate Education (later titled Dean of the Colleges).

Walt took the same energy and enthusiasm that he applied to being Chair to his position as Dean. In his nine years in that position he championed the importance of capstone experiences as an important component of the senior year. He proposed changes to the foundation and distribution requirements. He also devised new ways of reaching out to students of color and developed innovative ways of making advising a more valuable experience for both faculty and students. The "Windows on Research" and "Faculty Seminars" advising options were among his contributions and he was the principal investigator for the Windows on Research Program in its first year when it was supported by a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. In addition, he devoted considerable energy into encouraging more Tufts students to apply for competitive awards. He interviewed and coached these students and helped them every step of the way. With his guidance, the numbers of Tufts students winning Fulbright grants increased.

Walt practiced what he preached. He was also one of the best teachers and advisors at Tufts University. His sections of Introductory Psychology and Social Psychology, and his seminars on Altruism and Aggression were always sought after by our students. He continued to teach some of these courses while he was Dean of the Colleges. His intellectually engaging lectures and his interest in his students contributed to his being awarded one of the first Lillian and Joseph Leibner awards, and more recently the Seymour Simches Award for Distinguished Teaching and Advising.

In addition to his professional work, Walt has long had an interest in music. He began playing the piano at age five and loves singing. At Harvard, he was a member of the Harvard Glee Club and his undergraduate thesis was on the physiological nature of music appreciation. While at Tufts, he was a member of the Boston Cecilia Chorale Group and performed with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. For many years it was tradition in the Psychology Department for Walt to lead us in a rendition of the Twelve Days of Christmas at our holiday party. His clear voice could be counted on to carry the rest of us.

Walt has contributed to Tufts University and our students in many important ways and it is now up to us to follow his example. Walt can't be here with us today because his son Cliff is graduating from the UCSF School of Medicine and his daughter Allyson is graduating from University of Virginia Law School this week. However, we wish him the best as he moves to his new home in Tucson on the edge of Saguaro National Forest and we hope he visits us often when he makes his periodic trips to Massachusetts after he retires. Thanks Walt.

*On behalf of the Department of Psychology, I move that this resolution on the retirement of Walter C. Swap be spread on the permanent record of this faculty and that copies of it be sent to him and his wife Dorothy, and to his children.*

*May 19, 2004*

*Read by Professor Joseph DeBold*