Resolution on the Retirement of Professor of Sociology Susan Ostrander

In 1980, Susan Ostrander joined what was then the Department of Sociology and Anthropology as an assistant professor. Colleagues have heard her say time and again that, “Tufts is just the right place for me.” She received tenure in 1986 and was promoted to full professor in 1996. Susan served as department chair from 1995-1998 during a major transition as we became two distinct departments, and again from 2011-2013 during a time of stability and growth. Susan has seen over three decades of major change at Tufts, and that has made for a rewarding and often exciting and challenging career.

Susan teaches and does her research mainly about social inequalities, particularly issues of class and economic justice. She has taught courses on wealth, poverty, gender inequality, and on efforts by nongovernmental nonprofits, social change philanthropy, and activist organizing to address those inequalities. She has published numerous articles on these topics and authored or edited five books. Her first book, *Women of the Upper Class*, was published in 1984 and is still used in courses around the country. It argues that the home and community activities of these women reproduce the privilege of their class while simultaneously subordinating these women to their husbands. In 2013 Susan published a study of Somerville, Massachusetts called “Citizenship and Governance in a Changing City” that deals with a formerly white ethnic blue-collar city transformed by immigrants from Central and South America and the Caribbean and by a new more affluent middle class. Susan’s dedicated community involvement has stoked her research interests. She has served on boards of women's philanthropy organizations including the national network of women's funds, as well as the Cambridge Human Rights Commission, and a local Somerville immigrant rights organization called the Welcome Project.

Susan has also been something of an activist on the Tufts faculty, joining in the early years with faculty members who sought to establish programs in Women’s Studies and American Studies and to incorporate issues of gender and race into the curriculum and advocating for strong faculty governance. She has served on the Tenure and Promotion Committee, the Equal Educational Opportunity Committee, and the Faculty Executive Committee. She has taught courses in Peace and Justice Studies and the Urban and Environmental Studies Department. Her 2001 study of five universities around the U.S. with outstanding active citizenship programs made an important contribution at that time to the development Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service. She was part of the first group of Tisch College Faculty Fellows, and founded and co-led with Political Science professor Kent Portney the Tufts Civic Engagement Research Group from 2002-2007. Their collaboration led to a 2007 co-edited book showcasing research by other Tufts faculty and community partners called “Acting Civically: From Urban Neighborhoods to Higher Education.”

The best years of Susan’s professional life have been spent at Tufts and she has given Tufts University her best. Several cohorts of Tufts alums gained much from her gender course, and her courses in social stratification and community organizing. She has instructed students and participated with them in doing qualitative research, sending them into the field and guiding them carefully, and sometimes painfully. Significant and long-lasting relationships and alliances were formed with faculty colleagues throughout the university.

Susan blends a take charge direct posture with charm, unexpected gentleness and vulnerability. These personal qualities and her ability to recall names and faces, and work crowds at meetings, parties, and conferences, and her dazzling smile, have won her many friends and acquaintances on campus and in the wider society as she engaged in research, social life, and travel.

We will miss her, but we know that she will be continuing to do research, write, and publish. Most of all, now, she will find more time to spend with her precious grand-daughter, Maya, her son Mark (a Tufts alum), and her daughter-in-law Meghan all of whom make her very proud – and she will, of course, travel the world. Tufts has benefitted from Professor Susan Ostrander’s thirty-four years of working with colleagues, administrators, students and staff. She has made important, significant and worthwhile contributions to the Department of Sociology, to sociological scholarship, to the Tufts community, and to the communities around Tufts. 

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