The special committee of the General Faculty to prepare a memorial resolution for Mabel A. Wandelt, professor emeritus, nursing, has filed with the secretary of the General Faculty the following report.

Sue Alexander Greninger, Secretary
The General Faculty

IN MEMORIAM
MABEL A. WANDELT

Professor Emeritus Mabel A. Wandelt of The University of Texas at Austin School of Nursing died on November 20, 2008. She joined the faculty of this school in 1977 as professor and director of the Center for Health Care Research and Evaluation. Throughout her career and even into her retirement she made many long-lasting contributions to understanding and measuring quality of patient care and the characteristics of hospital work environments that are exemplars in attracting and retaining nurses. At the time of her death, she was survived by her sisters, Alberta Rasmussen and Lois Burgett.

The Early Years
Dr. Wandelt was born in Daggett, Michigan, in 1917 and commenced her professional career in 1938 as a graduate nurse of Michael Reese Hospital in Chicago. She subsequently continued her education earning a Bachelor of Science in public health nursing at Wayne State University in 1944, and then a Master of Public Health in 1948 and a Doctor of Education in 1954 from the University of Michigan. During this early period she served in the Army Nurse Corps and was employed in varying positions by the Veterans Administration.

Leadership in Nursing and Health Care
Dr. Wandelt’s academic career began with her appointment to the faculty of Wayne State University in 1958, continued at the University of Delaware from 1973-77, and culminated with her appointment as professor at The University of Texas at Austin, where she served as director of the Center for Health Care Research and Evaluation until her retirement in 1982. Throughout her academic career, Dr. Wandelt used the research process to clarify and strengthen the knowledge base for measuring quality of nursing care and nursing competencies and to identify the characteristics of hospital work environments that served to attract and retain nurses in practice settings. In this work, she was a pioneer, and despite the fact that present-day methods and knowledge have grown more complex and sophisticated, they nonetheless build—whether recognized or not—on her earlier insights, methodologies, and findings.

Dr. Wandelt was straightforward in her views about nursing and the research process, and this is exemplified in the title of a 1981 article in the *American Journal of Nursing* that she coauthored with Patricia Pierce and Robert Widdowson: “Why nurses leave nursing and what can be done about it.” That straightforward style made her 1970 nursing research textbook, *Guide for the Nurse Researcher*, a beacon as professional nurses nationwide were increasing seeking advanced education in graduate programs. A hallmark of her approach to the research process was starting with an irritation or felt need that nurses experienced in their real life practice settings.

Dr. Wandelt’s contribution to the measurement of nursing care continues to influence studies today that examine quality of nursing care. Most notable is her work done in conjunction with colleagues in developing the Quality Patient Care Scale (QualPacs) for observational ratings of nursing care. Originally published in 1974, this scale was a prototype for instruments to measure the quality of nursing care that are used today worldwide in various health care settings.

Dr. Wandelt played a vital role in design and conduct of the landmark study, *Magnet hospitals: Attraction and retention of professional nurses*, conducted under the aegis of the American Academy of Nursing. As a member
of the Task Force on Nursing Practice in Hospitals of the Academy, Dr. Wandelt along with her colleagues—Margaret McClure, Muriel Poulin, and Margaret Sovie—guided the design and writing of this study. Furthermore, Dr. Wandelt, through a contract to The University of Texas at Austin School of Nursing and its Center for Health Care Research and Evaluation, guided the collection and analysis of data that culminated in the final Magnet hospitals report published in 1983. The Magnet hospitals report continues to underlie many contemporary efforts to attract and retain nurses in hospital practice environments in the face of the current workforce shortage.

In recognition of her leadership role in nursing, Dr. Wandelt was selected as a fellow by the American Academy of Nursing in 1977. She was designated by the Academy as a living legend in 1997.

Selected Bibliography


This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of professors Lorraine Walker (chair), Jan Fox, and Diane Tyler.

Distributed to the dean of the School of Nursing, the executive vice president and provost, and the president March 26, 2009. Copies are available on request from the Office of the General Faculty, WMB 2.102, F9500. This resolution is posted under "Memorials" at: http://www.utexas.edu/faculty/council/.