

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Regents Communication

**Adopted by the
Regents
September 18, 2014**

ACTION REQUEST

Subject: Report of Faculty Death

Action Requested: Adoption of Memorial Statement

The Regents of the University of Michigan acknowledge with profound sadness the death of **Patricia Smith Yaeger, Ph.D.**, Henry Simmons Frieze Collegiate Professor of English and Women's Studies in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts. Professor Yaeger died on July 25, 2014, after a courageous battle with cancer.

Professor Yaeger received her B.A. degree from Bryn Mawr College in 1971 and her Ph.D. degree from Yale University in 1980. She joined the University of Michigan faculty as an associate professor in 1990, and was promoted to professor in 1999. She was named the Henry Simmons Frieze Collegiate Professor of English and Women's Studies in 2005.

Spanning the arc of Professor Yaeger's scholarship, from her training as a Yale Romanticist in the age of high theory, to *Luminous Trash*, the book manuscript underway when she died, is the spirit of what she termed "a female sublime," a sublime not of mastery but of undoing. She valued the restlessness and excess of her curiosity, which characteristically would open new intellectual territories only to return to question the bases of their authority, an approach she viewed as a productive form of violence. She loved the line from Yeats's "Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop": "For nothing can be sole or whole/That has not been rent." As editor of *PMLA*, from 2006-11, Professor Yaeger reimagined what this, the flagship journal of literary study in the U.S., could be, most notably in the innovative Theories and Methodologies section and her Editor's Columns. Her editorship was only one highlight of an illustrious career. She pioneered feminist scholarship of literature and culture, particularly of the American South, in *Honey-Mad Women: Emancipatory Strategies in Women's Writing* (1988) and the award-winning *Dirt and Desire: Reconstructing Southern Women's Writing 1930-1990* (2000). Professor Yaeger was a luminous scholar, vibrant teacher, gracious colleague, supportive mentor, fiercely loving wife and mother, passionate gardener, inimitable dancer, wondrous conversationalist, and precious friend to many. Her students describe her as generous with her insights about literature and life, a facility that was recognized by an award for Distinguished Graduate Mentoring in 2013.

As we mourn the loss of our beloved colleague, we also extend our heartfelt condolences to her husband Richard, her daughter Kyra, her son Noah, and her many loving relatives and friends.

Requested by:



Sally J. Churchill, J.D.
Vice President and Secretary of the University

September 2014