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Campus mourns graduate dean; memorial slated

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A memorial ceremony for Marsha Landolt, dean of the Graduate School and vice provost, and her husband, Robert Busch, will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 10 in 130 Kane. A reception will follow in the Walker-Ames Room.

Landolt, 55, and Busch, 58, died Jan. 2 when an avalanche struck their cabin near Soldier Mountain Ski Resort in Idaho. They were vacationing with five other members of their family, all of whom survived.

Landolt had been at the UW since 1975. She began as an assistant professor of fisheries, was promoted to associate professor in 1979 and became a full professor in 1986. She served as associate dean of the College of Ocean and Fishery Sciences from 1983 to 1991 and as director of the School of Fisheries from 1991 to 1996.

"Marsha's administrative skills were recognized early in her career when she was appointed associate dean of the College of Ocean and Fishery Sciences while still an associate professor," said Ross Heath, professor of oceanography and former dean of the college.

"She did an outstanding job, particularly in her areas of primary responsibility for student affairs and outreach to prospective students from Native American tribes from around the state. At the same time, she continued her pioneering research in fish pathology, where she was number one in the region, and taught highly rated graduate and undergraduate courses.

"In 1993, she agreed to relinquish her position in the dean's office to take over as director of the School of Fisheries at a difficult time in its history. She earned the respect of all segments of the school as she guided it in exciting new directions.

"She would have made a great university president, but elected to stay close to the academic heart of the university," Heath said. Landolt became dean of the Graduate School and vice provost in 1996.

"This past year was an amazing blossoming of her leadership role across the

entire campus," said David Hodge, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. "Her clear thinking, superb values, and humanity bound many of us together through a time of uncertainty and transition. She was the steady hand, the encouraging voice, that sustained and reaffirmed our commitment to doing the right things for the right reasons.

"Marsha was not a flashy person, but she was a person of enormous depth of character. I was amazed to discover more and more that truly impressed me as I got to know her better. When she had something to say about an issue, I listened carefully, having learned that she always had the most insightful views to add to the discussion."

Landolt was born in Houston and received her bachelor's degree in biology from Baylor University in 1969. Her master's degree in 1970 in zoology was from the University of Oklahoma, and her doctorate in pathology in 1976 was from George Washington University.

"This is a terrible loss," UW President Lee Huntsman said. "Our hearts go out to Marsha's and Bob's families. Marsha spent her whole career here, was a brilliant scientist, and a forceful and effective advocate for graduate education both here at the university and at the national level."

For example, at the national level in recent years, Landolt served as the UW representative to the Association of Graduate Schools, the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges' Council on Research Policy and Graduate Education and the Council on Graduate Schools, and she was on the board of directors and services committee overseeing the Graduate Record Examination, the nation's main test for students seeking entrance to graduate school.

Regionally her expertise on fish and human health and water-quality issues was tapped by agencies and groups including the Washington departments of fisheries, wildlife, agriculture and ecology, Puget Sound Water Quality Authority, Region 10 of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and METRO.

She was author, co-author or editor of nearly 80 scholarly publications and reports.

As a teacher, Landolt was committee chair for more than 25 graduate students and taught courses on such subjects as fish pathology, communicable diseases of fishes, and nutrition and health of aquatic animals. Four post-doctoral fellows were members of her research teams.

"Marsha was the absolute best to work for," said Gary Farris, administrator for the Graduate School. "She was always supportive, a great mentor, never lost her temper and gave those working for her the room to achieve their own goals as well as those of the organization. She gave loyalty and in return she received it, but it was never asked of anyone. Her wit, her charm and the warmth of her laughter were all part of a wonderful 20-year association for me. She was a brilliant researcher, teacher, mentor, administrator and boss. I will miss her greatly but remember her always."

"Marsha was the model of composure, dignity, intellect, integrity, humor, and commitment," said Cheryl Sorensen, assistant to the dean in the Graduate School. "She was devoted to her colleagues, to graduate students and graduate education, her profession, and most of all to her son and family. She was not only my boss but she was a precious friend. I feel fortunate to have seen many sides of her that not everyone had the opportunity to know."

—Bob Roseth and Sandra Hines

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