

Celebrating the Retirement of Dr. Susan Udin, Professor of Physiology, Jacobs School of Medicine



Dr. Susan Udin has taught in the SUNY system since 1979 after receiving her doctorate in Biology from MIT in 1975. She has won numerous grants for her research throughout her career and has published extensively in prestigious journals in her field of neuroscience. Dr. Udin has demonstrated her passion for women in science over the years as a member of the Association for Women in Science and Women in Neuroscience Association. She also started a lunch group for Women Professors of UB and was also a founder of the Graduate Group for Feminist Studies and later served on the Executive Committee of the Gender Institute.

Retirement Tributes

Joan S. Baizer, Associate Professor of Physiology and Biophysics

I first met Susan years ago on her recruitment trip to Buffalo; I was on the search committee. We took her to the then best Chinese restaurant in Buffalo, which was actually in Fort Erie, and all got along splendidly. I was delighted when she was offered and accepted the job here, and even more so when she and her husband decided to buy a house in the Parkside neighborhood two blocks away from me. Susan and I are both Neuroscientists but work in different areas. We have therefore never had a research collaboration but we have collaborated in both teaching and community work. For many years Susan and I along with a now-retired colleague developed and taught a very demanding graduate Neuroscience course. Its structure was such that we all came to every session and all worked intensively with the students. We also found that rehearsing lectures and important talks with each other to be very valuable. I have also collaborated with Susan on community projects. She became active in the Parkside Community Association, developing an Aging in Place initiative and committee that I also joined. Susan has always been passionate about supporting the careers of other women in science. She has organized the Women Faculty lunches that have been very useful for establishing connections among UB women faculty who, because of our unfortunate geographical distribution, would otherwise not be likely to encounter each other. She and I and Gail Willsky have also managed to have lunch together once a week for many years now. Susan's efforts on behalf of women have been very much appreciated, and I hope her involvement will continue after her retirement. Finally, Susan and I became friends, getting together many times over the years for meals, concerts, plays etc. (remember those?). Since she is

planning to stay in Buffalo these of course will continue-once we are allowed to return to the world.

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Glenna Bett, Associate Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Jacobs School of Medicine

Dr. Susan Udin has been an important and influential member of the UB community for four decades. Since her arrival here from MIT, she has worked tirelessly in her lab, and amassed an impressive array of academic credentials. Her research is focused on vision and, latterly, the neuromuscular junction. Dr. Udin received substantial recognition for these achievements including significant funding from the NSF and NIH, but equally important, her work was funded through charitable foundations such as the Whitehall foundation and the March of Dimes. The March of Dimes recognized the importance and impact into how a child's early visual experiences affect the way parts of the brain are "wired." Her interest in the welfare of children is not strictly academic, as I had the great pleasure of mentoring her son on a capstone project when he was a student in the biomedical engineering program. At the other end of the spectrum, caring for our more senior citizens, Susan was very active in her Parkside neighborhood community, where she served on the board of the Parkside Community Association, heading initiatives such as aging in place. Such selfless interest in the advancement and well-being of others is also clearly present in her academic life. Susan is an excellent teacher of both small and large classes, and director of undergraduate studies in Physiology. She was a strong leader in various medical school and faculty senate committees, where she strongly advocated for maintaining and building the high standards of academic achievement and excellence at UB. I also had regular opportunities to see the less tangible aspects that make her stand out as an excellent community member at UB. Susan organized regular Lunches for Women Faculty from across the University. During these lunches, she helped build a strong supportive network for the advancement of women faculty and a friendly forum in which we could discuss a range of issues from problems we were encountering in our careers, to where to find a good plumber. In addition, Susan is an important member of the gender institute and I am sure she will continue to be a strong advocate for women, even though she will officially be retiring from UB.

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Barbara Bono, Associate Professor of English

UB Professor of Physiology and Biophysics Sue Udin's championing of gender equality dates back to well before the 1986 founding of the Graduate Group for Feminist Studies and its successor organization, the UB Institute for Research and Education on Women and Gender, in 1997. Together with her great friend, UB Professor of Biochemistry Gail Willsky, Sue, who came to UB in 1979, was a part of that generation of South Campus-based women scientists—including Professor of Pharmacology and Toxicology Peggy Acara and Professor of Microbiology and Immunology Bernice Noble—who in the 1970s and 1980s felt acutely the inequality of access and regard for women in the sciences, and who envisioned a UB-wide, dual-campus, interdisciplinary effort to promote women's interests. Because of that early feminist involvement Sue was a founding member of IREWG and often a member of its Executive Committee. But in addition, she

has for many years independently organized a casual lunch for women faculty at an Indian restaurant mid-way between the two campuses. Often it's the only way, apart from the Gender Institute's annual "Old Girls/New Girls" reception, to meet women faculty from the other campuses (now that we have three) easily. For Sue is a quiet but intensely sociable—and socially conscious—person. She lives in my Parkside neighborhood, about four blocks away, and now that the weather is getting nice again I look forward to running into her and her husband David on evening walks. They're next door to one of Parkside's great gardeners, the equally sociable Pam Rose, that UB Health Sciences Librarian who with her Bernese Mountain dog Sophia started the practice of having therapy dogs on campus at exam time and who specializes in hostas: together the three of us will sometimes compare plant borders in the period leading up to the annual big garden walks. Sue is a long-time member of the Parkside Association, and founded and often staffs our active aging-in-place movement, which offers rides, resources, and snow removal to older residents. I also know her from our shared work with People United for Sustainable Housing (PUSH), a social and environmental justice organization on Buffalo's West Side. She and her husband David are significant donors and have often served as Table Captains for their annual fundraising breakfast. And when UB's Living Stipend Movement was at its height last year Sue was one of those faculty who appeared regularly at its demonstrations in support of raises to our graduate students' wages. She practices what she preaches, and will doubtless continue to do so, quietly but courageously.

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Carrie Tirado Bramen, Professor of English, Director, UB Gender Institute

Perhaps it's the Parkside neighborhood vibe, but Susan Udin—like her neighbor Barbara Bono—has the distinctive gift of bringing women faculty together across departments, schools, and even campuses. At least once a semester, Susan hosts lunches with UB women faculty at a nearby Indian restaurant. And it is on these occasions that I have had the chance to meet other faculty members from the Schools of Engineering, Biomedical Sciences, Education, to name but a few. Despite the differences in our research interests and expertise, there is always engaging conversation about a variety of topics: work-life balance, research challenges, advice on grants, among other matters. There are two things that are most striking about these lunches: first, the price has only increased by \$1 over the past five years; and second, Susan is a quiet and calm presence, who effortlessly draws people toward her. When I first attended, I was a bit trepidatious: I wasn't sure what to expect. I assumed that Susan would be a dominating raconteur, an intimidating senior colleague, and a tireless extrovert who would encourage awkward ice-breaking exercises. But fortunately, the opposite was true. Her quiet form of leadership made people feel immediately at ease, and she created what my teenage daughters would describe as a "chill" atmosphere. This has been the secret of her success and the reason why these gatherings have become such an important fixture in our professional lives. I hope that Susan will continue this wonderful tradition and I wish her the very best as she embarks on the next chapter of her life.

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Rosemary Dziak, Professor of Oral Biology, School of Dental Medicine

When I first became active in the Gender Institute in 2005, Susan Udin was already a long-standing member of the Executive Committee and an enthusiastic supporter of its mission. Susan, a professor of physiology in the Medical School, is an accomplished neurophysiologist and a wonderful role model and mentor for those pursuing science at its highest level. I remember the first time I met Susan it was not at a Gender Institute meeting, but at a committee meeting in the 1980s for one of our Ph.D. students in Oral Biology who was conducting research in an area outside most of our faculty's expertise. Susan served on his committee to provide her neuroscience expertise. I quickly became very impressed with her knowledge and ability to guide and help mentor this nontraditional student, outside of her department. Most likely, Susan functioned on that committee as she did on many other Ph.D. student committees, but I know how important her scientific guidance was for that student's success. In addition to her research, teaching, and mentoring activities, Susan has been active as a convener of the Association of Women Full Professors and worked in coordination with the Gender institute in that capacity. I think most of the women faculty at UB have received emails from Susan inviting them to the lunches she has coordinated for all of us to interact and share experiences in an informal setting. I am not sure when Susan first started organizing these lunches, but I have emails going all the way from 2010 until last month with her welcoming invitation to join fellow women faculty from all units. These lunches have served as a great opportunity for women to get to know others whom they might not have ever had otherwise. Susan is undoubtedly responsible for initiating with these lunches countless friendships and collaborations. I wish to thank Susan for all the help she provided me during my years as Co-Director and Director of the Gender Institute and hope she will be able to stay connected to our UB community.

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Gail Willsky, Professor Emeritus

I have known Susan for over 50 years since college. She is bright, witty, caring, loyal, organized, has a great sense of humor and has been a good friend. I have always admired her extensive knowledge of literature, music, movies and history. She is a great fan of classical music and opera, but can also be found at a Rolling Stones concert. However, I have not been able to convince her that there is any merit in Broadway Musicals. Susan can be easily incensed by poor administrative ideas at the school or granting agencies and willing to wade through the effort to fix them. Can anyone really think that it makes sense to charge someone who studies frogs to be billed by the number of tadpoles? Her research activities in neurobiology have been well received in the field and she has spent many enjoyable stints as a visiting scientist around the world. Susan has also been heavily involved in service on behalf of women at UB. When on UB promotion committees from the Medical School level to the PRB she made sure that women were given a fair hearing in the promotion process. She always has had time to mentor women at UB who have reached out to her for help in navigating the path to success. She cares deeply about human rights and political causes and has been an active protestor since college days in Boston. At UB she has been a strong supporter of the union and is now the Advocacy chair for the Buffalo HSC chapter. She has been a caring mentor to many students from undergraduate through graduate level and beyond. She has

been organizing a group of us for dinner and plays for at least 10 years. She has also made sure that Joan Baizer, and I get together with her for lunch once a week, now being zoom meetings. Susan has also organized “Lunch with the Women Faculty” once a semester for years, a time to meet other women faculty over Lunch and discuss issues that arise across campus. To the benefit of those of us who attend, Susan has said she will continue this event after retirement. Susan’s volunteering activities are also spread to the community. She is very active in the Parkside Community Organization, and has been judging the local WNY Science fair for years as examples. Susan has done all of this while raising two children with her husband David. We all wish Susan the best in her retirement years and know that she will be missed at the University. I consider myself lucky to be able to continue my relationship with Susan as a good friend.