

## **2018 Thomas Jefferson Award to Professor Sue Estroff**

*Presented October 12, 2018 at UNC Faculty Council Meeting  
Jonathan Oberlander, Professor and Chair of Social Medicine, UNC Chapel Hill*

It is an honor to introduce my colleague and friend of 21 years, Sue Estroff. Sue joined the UNC faculty in the Department of Social Medicine in 1983. She has been a vital member of the campus community ever since.

Sue has demonstrated a remarkable commitment to the university, serving as chair of the faculty, co-chair of the Academic Plan Steering Committee, chair of the Honorary Degrees and Awards Committee, and a member of countless other committees. Until I read Sue's CV, I did not realize just how many committees UNC has.

If there is a task to be done, a committee to be chaired, a report to be written, then Sue is often the faculty member that is asked to step up, and her answer is invariably yes. Sue's extensive service work reflects how deeply she cares about the university, its governance, intellectual climate, and academic character.

Sue is also an extraordinary mentor, colleague, scholar, and teacher. Numerous UNC students have sought Sue out for advice, help, consolation, education, and inspiration. Students find Sue because they want to learn from her expertise in mental health, disability studies, stigma and chronic conditions, medical anthropology, and qualitative research. They also find Sue because they have heard that she is a tireless advocate for students who will always listen and go the extra mile to help them.

Sue displays the same commitment to colleagues. She has been an invaluable resource, frequent sounding board, and influential mentor for numerous faculty at UNC—myself included. When a faculty member has a problem, needs career advice, or has personal issues, they often will turn to Sue. She is always there for them.

As a scholar and medical anthropologist, Sue is a pioneer. She has sought to understand the voices and experiences of persons with serious mental illness and analyze the sociocultural forces that influence the experiences of persons with disabling chronic illnesses. Her interest in these populations is more than academic; she has long been involved with local community organizations that serve people who have a serious mental illness.

Finally, Sue is fierce. If you know Sue, you know that she does not shy away from argument or difficult issues. On campus, she has long been a champion for justice, intellectual integrity, and academic freedom. Sue is unafraid to speak up and unafraid to speak truth to power. Thomas Jefferson said that "a little rebellion now and then is a good thing." Sue, thank you for all of your service—and for your rebellion.