



Lillian C. McDermott (1931-2020)

Professor of Physics and Director of the Physics Education Group at the University of Washington.

Prof. McDermott received her B.A. from Vassar College and a Ph.D. in experimental nuclear physics from Columbia University (1959). She was appointed to the faculty in the University of Washington Physics Department in 1973 and promoted to Full Professor in 1981.

Prof. McDermott was widely recognized for her leadership in promoting the importance of physics education research as a subdiscipline of physics, and developing research-based curricula that have improved student learning of physics from kindergarten to graduate school. Her foundational work in physics education research has had an international impact on physics education and her record of publications, accomplishments, and awards is second to none in the field.

For over 30 years, Prof. McDermott worked to establish research in physics education as a field for scholarly inquiry by physicists. In 1973 she began a new program in which graduate students earn doctorates in physics for research on the learning and teaching of physics. It has since become the longest-lived teacher education program based in a university physics department in the United States. Prof. McDermott established the Physics Education Group at the University of Washington and the group conducts a coordinated program of research, curriculum development, and instruction. The group has served as a model for discipline-specific educational research and curriculum development, and produced numerous trailblazing articles. Many physicists from around the world have attended the University of Washington to visit, or to work with, Prof. McDermott and many of her graduate students and postdocs have gone on to faculty positions across the globe. The group engaged in developing two sets of research-based instructional materials: *Tutorials in Introductory Physics* and *Physics by Inquiry*. Both are widely distributed in the U.S. and have been translated into several other languages.

Prof. McDermott was a fellow of the American Physical Society (APS) and the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS). Among the numerous awards she has received are the 2000 Archie Mahan Prize of the Optical Society of America (OSA) and the 2000 Education Research Achievement Award of the Council of Scientific Society Presidents (CSSP). She was recognized by the AAPT with the Robert A. Millikan Lecture Award in 1990, the Oersted Medal in 2002, the International Commission on Physics Education Medal in 2002, shared the APS Education Award with her colleagues in 2008 and the Melba Phillips Award in 2013. In 2014 she was given the University Faculty Lecture Award, one of the highest honors at the University of Washington.

Prof. McDermott has been a lifelong friend of GIREP and a strong supporter of GIREP's goals in Physics Education Research (PER). In 2002, Prof. McDermott received the ICPE medal in Udine during the GIREP-ICPE Seminar on Quality development of teacher education and training and in 2015 was presented with GIREP Medal at Wroclaw GIREP-EPEC Congress on Key competences in physics teaching and learning in recognition of her longstanding contributions to international physics education.



Prof. McDermott was a highly respected member of the international physics education community and a special friend of all of us for her open mind, the generous availability and human quality. She will always remain in our hearts for its great human value, she will be sadly missed by all her GIREP friends. May she rest in peace.