

# Rosalyn Watts, Nursing

NOVEMBER 7, 2023

VOL 70 ISSUE 13 ([HTTPS://ALMANAC.UPENN.EDU/VOLUME-70-NUMBER-13](https://almanac.upenn.edu/volume-70-number-13)) | DEATHS | PRINT



Rosalyn (Roz) Watts, an emerita associate professor in the nursing and biobehavioral health sciences departments of Penn's School of Nursing, died on October 19. She was 85.

Dr. Watts had a distinguished academic career at the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing that spanned four decades and combined teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities. She joined Penn Nursing's faculty as an instructor in 1969, moving through the ranks to become an associate professor in the graduate division of nursing in 1982. She also held a secondary appointment in the department of nursing and biobehavioral health sciences. She retired in 1999 and assumed emeritus status.

*Rosalyn Watts*

Dr. Watts's impact at Penn was wide. In 1984, she developed the Critical Care Clinical Nurse Specialist Program, which evolved over the next ten years into the first Critical Care Nurse Practitioner program in the country. Alumni commonly refer to themselves as "a graduate of Roz's program." Combining "superb professional leadership and interdisciplinary collaboration," Dr. Watts was an advocate and mentor for minority students and spearheaded the Biennial Black Health program at Penn Nursing, which addressed health disparities for African Americans. When Dr. Watts received Penn's coveted Lindback Award in 1997 (Almanac April 15, 1997), a former graduate student wrote: "a teacher should enable students to think and create as they might say in today's re-engineering circles 'out of the box.' Roz Watts has been out of the box for years. She always insisted on high standards. She insisted that we write 'elegantly,' think 'critically,' and perform expertly." A colleague noted: "The School of Nursing is justifiably proud of its advising program and Dr. Watts serves as a role model for excellence in undergraduate and graduate and doctoral advising."

Dr. Watts' passion for advancing marginalized groups' presence at Penn did not end with her retirement from Penn; shortly thereafter, Dr. Watts returned to Penn Nursing to lead the Office of Diversity Affairs. As the director of this office, she interacted with faculty, students, and staff to help facilitate the school's diversity agenda with emphasis on recruitment of under-represented groups, curriculum development on cultural competence, and faculty development [regarding] diversity.

"We have lost one of our most respected, and most beloved scholars whose impact was felt by many," said Penn Nursing dean Antonia Villarruel in an email to faculty. "She was a trusted colleague and friend who inspired, supported, and touched students, faculty, and all with whom she met."

A funeral service will be held on November 17, 2023, at 10 a.m. at the Salem Baptist Church, 2741 Woodland Ave, Abington, PA 19001. Dr. Watts is survived by her family members, Mark and Robin Watts.