Nancy Welch  
January 31, 1941 – May 9, 1979

Nancy “had a searing mind, a warm heart, an endearing demeanor, and a genuine belief in the work that was being undertaken and accomplished at Rachel Carson College.”  
– Carole Smith Petro

“Irving Spitzberg

“Nancy was an effective leader. She was always able to read the personalities and emotions of those around her.”

Nancy Welch, a former member of the UB community, worked hard to bring a sense of citizenship to this campus. During her short time at UB, she accomplished a great deal and had a lasting impression on those who knew her.

Before making Buffalo her home, Welch spent a significant amount of time overseas with her husband, Claude Welch. They met at Harvard College and married at the end of her junior year; shortly after, the newlyweds spent time in Oxford, England and then in Ghana and the Gambia. During her stay overseas, Welch sustained her love of learning and upon her return to the United States; she completed her bachelor’s degree in less than two years.

In 1973 at the age of 32, Welch was diagnosed with breast cancer. Following her diagnosis, she spent a great deal of time volunteering; she supported the PTA and the League of Women Voters. In 1975, in an effort to deal with her diagnosis, she took a part time job at UB as the Residential Coordinator at Rachel Carson College, located in the Joseph P. Ellicott Complex. The Ellicott Complex had recently opened a year earlier on UB’s North Campus, which was still under construction and very much isolated. Welch’s job as Residential Coordinator was to develop interdisciplinary programs that would alleviate some of the isolation felt by students. One of her popular programs was Sunday Night Suppers. Welch would bring all four of her children—Elisabeth, Sarah, Martha, and Christopher—to these suppers and they would all interact with the students. Sunday Night Suppers gave the students residing in Ellicott a taste of home. During this difficult period in her life, Welch’s contact with UB students rejuvenated her.

Early in 1978 Welch, along with her husband and children went on an extended vacation to Oxford, England. Later that year, in August, shortly after Welch returned to Buffalo, she found out her cancer had recurred. During her final months, she formulated the criteria for the Nancy Welch Award.

After six long years battling breast cancer, Nancy Welch died on May 9, 1979. 35 years later, Welch’s values continue to live on through the Nancy Welch Award.