Donna Harrington, a leader in doctoral education, was especially known for being an exemplary mentor of doctoral students. For this reason, the 2018 GADE board voted to name the GADE award for excellence in mentoring doctoral students in her honor. Mentorship was not what Donna did, but who she was as a person. Donna was the recipient of the 2018 GADE award for excellence in mentoring doctoral students.

Donna was also a leader in GADE. She served on the GADE Board from 2013-2016, functioning as the treasurer from 2014-2016. In addition, she was one of the principal editors of the GADE Quality Guidelines for PhD programs.

Donna served as the Associate Dean for Doctoral and Post-Doctoral Education at the University of Maryland School of Social Work where she mentored numerous PhD students. She chaired over 30 dissertations during her career. Emblematic of her mentorship, Donna made a quilt for each of those students. She chose to spend the last days of her life working with and mentoring her students.