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**Memorial Resolution of the Faculty of the University of Wisconsin-Madison  
On the Death of Professor Emeritus Roberto G. Sánchez**

Roberto Garza Sánchez was born in San Antonio, Texas, on September 24, 1922, as the child of immigrant parents from México. Roberto's parents had placed a high value on education, which they considered an integral component of their son's upbringing and cultural formation. Upon graduating from Corpus Christi High School in 1940, Roberto enrolled in Corpus Christi Junior College for the two inaugural years of his post-secondary education. A first-generation US-born citizen, and the first in his family to attend college, Roberto then transferred to the University of Texas, where he earned a BA degree in 1943. In the following year he received a Master of Arts degree from the same institution. He was subsequently accepted into the Doctoral Program of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at UW-Madison, where he initiated his doctoral studies, with a minor in French. Originally, Roberto intended to specialize in Latin American literature, but his research interests gravitated toward Peninsular Spanish literature, focusing increasingly on drama. He defended his dissertation on *The Theatre of Federico García Lorca*, under Edward R. Mulvihill's supervision in 1949, an achievement that effectively consolidated Roberto's deep and long-lasting love for the theatre. A UW-Madison post-doctoral Markham Fellowship enabled him to conduct further research in Spain in the ensuing academic year. And it was upon his return states-side in 1950 that Roberto joined the UW-Madison faculty ranks as an Assistant Professor of Spanish. He was granted tenure in 1955 and was promoted to Full Professor in 1963. Roberto remained a prolific and influential scholar, publishing two important monographs and some twenty-seven articles on García Lorca, Benito Pérez Galdós, and Leopoldo Alas (Clarín), among many others. He also co-edited with Edward Mulvihill four popular editions of modern Spanish literary classics, a few of which continue to be used in classrooms across the country. His service contributions as a UW faculty member were as wide-ranging as they were meaningful. Among them, his efforts on behalf of the University Task Force on Minority Student Retention deserve special mention. Roberto belonged to several major professional societies, and was elected as a standing member of the Academia Norteamericana de la Lengua Española. He retired in 1984 and moved to Santa Barbara, California in 2002.

Roberto's most lasting legacy in the Department—a legacy that endures vibrantly to this day—was undoubtedly the culture of theatre and performance that he actively fostered for more than three decades. Not only did he direct the Department's annual Spanish and Spanish-American play, bringing together students, faculty and staff as actors, stagehands, technicians, and wardrobe supervisors, but he was also an exceptionally gifted drama teacher. In the words of one of his former students, Roberto was able to elicit an unsuspected vitality and relevance from 19<sup>th</sup>-century Spanish Romantic drama. He was always acutely aware that “theatre was written not to be read, but to be performed, seen, heard.” The plays Roberto directed drew regular and enthusiastic audiences of UW faculty and students as well as high-school Spanish classes from Madison and surrounding communities. In 1974, in commemoration of the silver anniversary of its annual Spanish-language dramatic production, the Spanish and Portuguese Department staged a special adaptation of the early modern classic *La Celestina*. Fittingly, Roberto dedicated his production of the “tragicomedy” to Lloyd Kasten and Eduardo Neale-Silva, two of the Department's renowned Hispanists, who were due to retire soon. Roberto's exceptional sensitivity, as both a stage director and a literary critic, to the challenges and complexities of producing a generically hybrid text from the dawn of modernity found compelling expression in an important scholarly article he subsequently published in the journal *Estreno*.

Even after he retired, Roberto continued to kindle his passion for the theatre. In 1985, he returned to direct the Spanish and Portuguese Department's production of *La de San Quintín* ["A Hard-fought Battle"] by the Spanish realist master Benito Pérez Galdós as well as Pirandello's *La Giara* ["The Jar"] for the Department of French and Italian. As he reportedly confided to his close friends, had Roberto not pursued a successful academic career, he might perhaps have become a playwright. And in effect, in 2010, he wrote and directed two original one-act plays (*Charlemagne and Marmalade* and *A Dog Named Bernie*) for the living community where he resided in Santa Barbara, California.

Above all, however, Roberto cherished education, and he imbued his teaching with the same dedication and passion that defined everything he did. More than a profession, for Roberto, teaching was a calling. One of his advisees calls him "a master teacher," and fondly recalls the awe and admiration he felt upon discovering, at the end of Roberto's fifty-minute classes, that he had somehow accumulated six or more pages of notes without realizing it. Another of his former students, who would become a life-long friend, mentions recurrently "using the Spanish Professor Sánchez taught me many years ago and for which I am eternally grateful to him." Roberto's outstanding performance as an educator was formally recognized in 1979, when he received the Emil H. Steiger Award for Distinguished Teaching. He also directed some fifteen doctoral dissertations, and was a supervisor and mentor to generations of teaching assistants, who went on to become reputable and prolific scholars and teachers in their own right. His passion and enthusiasm for teaching and his unshakable commitment to helping others prevailed after Roberto retired, as evidenced in his volunteer work for Madison's public schools, St Mary's Hospital, and, most significantly, in his generous endowment of scholarships for Latino/a students in public institutions. His family having instilled in him a belief in the dignity and singular worth of education, Roberto now strove to provide Latino/a K-12 and first-generation students attending two-year colleges or transferring to UW-Madison the opportunity to pursue their post-secondary education. It was this objective that the scholarship funds he established at Del Mar College in Corpus Christi, the Madison School District, Madison Colleges, and UW-Madison, sought consistently to meet. To date, almost ninety students have benefitted from his philanthropy: six at UW-Madison, twenty-one at Madison College, and sixty from several Madison high schools. Our own department has for several years been extremely fortunate to experience first-hand his spirit of giving through a Theatre and Distinguished Lectureship Fund, whose aim is to provide financial support for guest lectures dealing with theatre and performance, dramatic productions, performances and academic symposia.

In his retirement Roberto enjoyed traveling, playing tennis, the company of his dachshunds Quico and Paco, reading, the theatre, and above all, the fellowship of friends and acquaintances as well as helping others. Those of us who knew him will remember him warmly, and his legacy of giving will benefit public education in the Madison community, both at the secondary and post-secondary level, well into the future.

As Henry Adams famously put it, "a teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops." No one embodies the abiding truth these words express more completely than Roberto, who passed away on August 15, 2016, in Santa Barbara, California, at the age of 93. We miss him profoundly, but his memory will endure for countless years to come.