

UC SANTA BARBARA

Office of the Chancellor

October 23, 2018

Dear Members of our Campus Community,

I am saddened to share with you that Professor Emeritus Giorgio Perissinotto passed away on September 22, surrounded by his wife, Gloria, and his two daughters, Francesca and Carla.

He was born in Trieste, Italy, at the end of World War II. From a migrant family, he arrived in New York and later studied at Syracuse University and then at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid. To his native tongue he added English and Spanish, demonstrating his early interest and talent for languages.

He obtained his Ph.D. at Columbia University in 1971, with a thesis titled *Fonología del español hablado en la Ciudad de México*, which he wrote at El Colegio de México in 1967, with a scholarship by the Organization of American States. It was later published as a book.

While in Mexico, he participated in the Indigenous Education Program in the state of Oaxaca. This experience with original languages, and his interest in education, had a beneficial influence on his training in Hispanic linguistics and his contacts with other languages.

Dr. Perissinotto joined our faculty in 1976, and throughout the next 34 years played a pivotal role in helping to build and advance our Department of Spanish and Portuguese, including serving as department chair. From January 2007 to July 2009, Dr. Perissinotto was Study Center Director of the UC Education Abroad Program in Madrid, Spain. He was also co-founder of the Summer Institute of Hispanic Languages and Culture of UC Santa Barbara. He became a professor emeritus in June 2010, and continued his renowned scholarly activities.

A member of the Modern Language Association, he was a recognized specialist in Hispanic languages and linguistics, including history of the language, dialectology, Mexican Spanish, and California Spanish. He was vice president of the Santa Barbara Trust for Historic Preservation, where he studied the language used in California during Colonial times, and also had a preponderant role in restoring

monuments in our city. Of special merit is his documentation of everyday life in early Spanish California through the Santa Barbara Presidio memorias between 1779 and 1810, as shown in his book *Documenting everyday life in early Spanish California*, published in 1998.

Dr. Perissinotto was author, editor, and co-editor of several books and author of a large number of articles, essays, and reviews, with themes ranging from medieval literature (about which he published a book in 1988) to the case of Spanish spoken in the United States and the linguistic perspectives on the Romance languages, with special emphasis on the historical and philological intricacies of the Spanish language.

Among the many American, Chicano, and Mexican specialists dedicated to studying the Spanish language in the Southwest U.S., he stood out for his balance in considering data and reaching conclusions resulting from his long years of researching Peninsular and Mexican Spanish, nourished by his historical perspective. In October 2016 he participated in a special colloquium on the extinction and loss of languages at the prestigious El Colegio Nacional of Mexico, along with Luis Fernando Lara and the preeminent scholar Miguel León-Portilla, one of the principal investigators of pre-Columbian America.

Professor Giorgio Perissinotto will always be remembered as an esteemed scholar, a beloved and admired colleague with a kind and gentle spirit, and an inspirational teacher and mentor, with a lasting impact on our university and the field. He will be missed by all. Our hearts go out to Gloria, Francesca, Carla, and all of his family members, colleagues, students, and friends. Our campus flag will be lowered in his honor on October 30.

Sincerely,

Henry T. Yang
Chancellor