

April 16, 2024

To: Dorothy Chun, Chair
UC Santa Barbara Emeriti Association Membership Committee

Muriel Zimmerman, President
UC Santa Barbara Emeriti Association Membership Committee

From: Bill Ashby and Loy Lytle
Members, UC Santa Barbara Emeriti Association Advisory Board

We wish to nominate William (Bill) J. Villa as an Honorary Member of the Emeriti Association, effective July 1, 2024. According to Section 3 of the Association's By-Laws, an Honorary Member must be nominated by two regular Association members who document the qualifications of the nominee prior to review and approval by a majority vote of the Association's Board. We hope our nomination will be circulated and reviewed prior to a discussion and vote at the Board's next meeting on May 7, 2024. In what follows, we will review the reasons why we believe Mr. Villa meets the essential criteria for Honorary Membership—namely, that his dedication, commitment, and academic leadership have significantly enriched the substance of and contributed to the academic goals of UC Santa Barbara in several different meaningful ways.

By way of background, Bill Villa is a seventh-generation member of a family that played a significant role in founding the Royal Presidio of Santa Barbara in 1782. He was born and raised in Santa Barbara. After graduating from Santa Barbara High School and completing his first two years of study at Santa Barbara Junior (now Community) College, he spent a few years away while earning a bachelor's degree in the social sciences at San Francisco State University and a secondary teaching credential at Humboldt State University. He then returned to his hometown and earned a master's degree in counseling psychology from UC Santa Barbara. During the course of his educational journey--which also included stints with the U.S. Forestry Service and Security Pacific Bank to earn money to pay for his postgraduate education--Bill became imbued with the idea that "...each person should be encouraged and helped to realize his/her fullest potential, regardless of economic, educational, or physical disadvantages and/or cultural differences." It is this central theme that best encapsulates William Villa's work and volunteer ethos during the time he served our own students, while working on their behalf at UC Santa Barbara, as well as for his other contributions made to our local community and the rest of California.

In January 1968 Bill Villa began his employment as an Associate Director and the first Chicano counselor in UC Santa Barbara's Educational Opportunity Program (EOP). The Program was conceived to help underrepresented minority students make smoother transitions to university life by providing financial aid, tutoring, residential housing, as well as be an important mechanism to better link faculty, staff, and students. In 1968 the UC Santa Barbara student body population was about 95% white, 1.5%

African American, 1.5% Chicano/a, and 2% international. As a result of the Vietnam War, political and cultural activism was vigorous at that time, and the EOP minority students coalesced in their desire to find a place in a “predominately white campus”.

The Chicano/a students formed an advocacy group (the United Mexican-American Students; UMAS) with the Black Student Union to lobby then Chancellor Vernon Cheadle to organize a committee to investigate problems of campus racism. Staff (including Bill Villa), faculty, and student members of the committee proposed the *Centro (Center) Concept* to provide financial and educational programs to its minority students through the provision of teaching, research, and public service opportunities. A Chicano/a Studies proposal, formulated primarily by Villa and his EOP faculty and staff colleagues, emerged at the end of summer 1969. The proposal called for the establishment of a centralized Chicano/a EOP program, a Department of Chicano Studies, a Center of Chicano/a Studies, as well as an ethnic library holding area, all four of which to be housed in one on-campus building. Bill Villa was one of the signatories of the proposal, which was endorsed ultimately by the campus and later approved by the Regents of the University of California.

At another gathering later that year at UC Santa Barbara, a faculty and student group (some of whom came from elsewhere) created what has become known as *El Plan de Santa Barbara*—a plan to emphasize the need for higher education to establish Chicano/a studies as an entity fully incorporated into the structure of academia. The end-result, following several more meetings, Chancellor-appointed committee deliberations, a few student demonstrations and, finally, systemwide approval, UC Santa Barbara became the first higher education institution in the United States to create a Department of Chicano/a Studies, the Chicano/a Organized Unit, and Chicano Educational Opportunity Program in 1970-71. In addition, *El Plan* proved so influential that in many instances Chicano Studies programs at many of our sister campuses and several other California State Universities followed the basic tenets of *El Plan*.

We do not want to imply that Bill Villa was the sole creator and/or leader of the *Central Concept* or *El Plan de Santa Babara* movements. Neither was he the instigator or tactician for the demonstrations, sit-ins, and faculty and student activism needed to effect the changes needed to initiate and sustain the emergence of ethnic studies at UC Santa Barbara. However, it should be noted here that William Villa was an effective and important “guide on the side” as he and his staff, faculty, and student colleagues advocated, cajoled, and ultimately succeeded in achieving their goals on campus, as well as elsewhere. It also seems clear that the EOP-based faculty, staff, and student activism beginning in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s was the harbinger of a time, over 40-years later, when a “predominantly white” UC Santa Barbara campus became one of the first Hispanic Serving Institutions (HIS) in the United States. When it first achieved this status in 2013-14, it was the *only* HIS that was also a member of the prestigious Association of American Universities. Shortly thereafter, UC Santa Barbara also earned a second designation as an Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-

Serving Institution (AANAPISI). Both designations and their positive effects on faculty, staff, and student continue to grow to the present time.

Following his 10-year tenure as Associate Director of the EOP Bill Villa was appointed UC Santa Barbara Director of Admissions and Relations with Schools at the conclusion of a nationwide search. During Bill's 25-years of service in that position, he accomplished much in terms of its impact on student recruitment, well-being, and degree completion at the national, state, and local levels. Notable among those efforts are the following:

- Bill served twelve years on the National Committee of the College Board, (a mission-driven, not-for-profit organization that connects students to college success). During that time he spent three years as a member of the National Council on Access Services and a member of the Steering Committee for a Review of College Board Communications.
- Appointed by California Governor Jerry Brown to the California Student Aid Commission, Bill served as a Commission member for 10-years, including being elected Chair of the Commission for four of those years by the 11 members of the Commission.
- Bill also served 6 years as a member of the Community Board of Directors of the Santa Barbara Continuing Education Advisory Council; 10 years as a Trustee on the Santa Barbara Foundation; 13 years as a member of the Cottage Hospital Board of Directors; 5 years as a Founding Member of the Santa Barbara City College Alumni Association; and 1 year on the UC Santa Barbara Alumni Association Board of Directors.

William Villa's contributions were also recognized on several different occasions during his service to the campus and community:

- In 1991 he was the designated keynote speaker for the dedication of the new Student Services Building at Santa Barbara Community College.
- In 1994 he was designated the Santa Barbara Hispanic Achievement Council's Honoree of the Year
- In 2000 he received the Margaret Gettman Award for Service to UC Santa Barbara's undergraduate students. Presented by the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, the Gettman Award recognizes an *individual* faculty or staff member who has demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to the general growth and development of students and the quality of their lives.

- Interestingly, in 2002 a second student affairs award, named the William J. Villa Award, was created to recognize a campus *department or organization* that has demonstrated an extraordinary commitment to the general growth, development, and well-being of students. This award has been given annually to deserving departments and other campus organizations since its inception in 2002.
- Finally, Bill was the recipient of UC Santa Barbara Alumni Association's Graver Service Award in 2010. The Graver Service Award recognized his demonstrated exceptional leadership and service to the University through direct and meaningful involvement with Association-related activities.

We hope you will join us in recognizing the career-long achievements of William J. Villa by awarding him an Honorary Membership in the UC Santa Barbara Emeriti Association.

Cc: Muriel Zimmerman