

UC SANTA BARBARA

THE *Current*

April 23, 1998

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Luis Leal Elected to Elite Academy of Spanish Language

Further capping a brilliant career that has earned him a succession of impressive honors, UC Santa Barbara literary scholar Luis Leal has been elected to the North American Academy of the Spanish Language, an affiliate of the prestigious Royal Academy of Spanish.

Conferred on the basis of scholarly achievement and stature in the humanities, membership in the organization is reserved for those intellectuals whose work has greatly advanced the study of Spanish letters throughout the world. Membership is limited to fewer than 40 individuals, and the election of newcomers is rare. Leal, a pioneer in the fields of Chicano literary history and Mexican short-fiction criticism, will be formally honored by the group in a future ceremony.

"It's very satisfying to know that I have been recognized in this way. I believe honors such as this are a reflection of the outstanding work that is now common among scholars of literature in Spanish," said Leal, a UCSB faculty member since 1976.

Leal is internationally renowned for his research concerning Mexico, Latin America, and the experiences of Chicanos. His 55-year career has included teaching stints at the University of Chicago, the University of Mississippi, Emory University, and the University of Illinois. His book "A Brief History of the Mexican Short Story" is considered a landmark of modern literary scholarship.

A prolific researcher and writer, Leal is the author of 16 books and the recipient of numerous honors. In 1988, he received the Distinguished Scholarly Award from the National Association for Chicano Studies in recognition of his lifetime achievement, and in 1991 he was awarded the Mexican Order of the Aztec Eagle, the highest honor granted to foreign citizens by the Mexican government.

Most recently, he was awarded the National Humanities Medal by President Clinton and the first lady during a White House ceremony. The medal, which replaced the Charles Frankel Prize in the Humanities, recognizes individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the public's understanding of history, literature, and other humanities disciplines.

UCSB established an endowed chair in honor of Leal in 1989. The only position of its kind in the nation, the Luis Leal Endowed Chair in Chicano Studies was founded with a \$390,000 endowment of contributions from donors, corporations, and the Mexican government.

"Election to the North American Academy of the Spanish Language is a fitting tribute to Professor Leal's storied career. His work has significantly influenced the course of modern literary scholarship, and I am proud to claim him as a colleague," said Francisco Lomeli, chair of UCSB's Chicano Studies Department and a professor of Spanish.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.