

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

*Regents Communication*

**ACTION REQUEST**

**Subject: Report of Faculty Retirement**

**Action Requested: Adoption of Retirement Memoir**

**William R. Paulson, Ph.D.**, Edward Lorraine Walter Collegiate Professor of Romance Languages and Literatures and professor of Romance languages and literatures in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, retired from active faculty status on May 31, 2021.

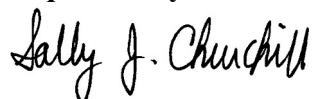
Professor Paulson attended Rockford College (Rockford, IL) where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in French and mathematics in 1976. He then attended Princeton University (Princeton, NJ) where he earned his Master of Arts degree in French in 1978 and his Ph.D. degree in French in 1981. In 1981, he was appointed assistant professor of French at Mount Holyoke College; he joined the University of Michigan faculty as visiting assistant professor of French in 1986, then assistant professor in 1987. He was promoted to associate professor in 1989 and professor in 1995.

Professor Paulson is a distinguished scholar of 18th- and 19th-century French literature, his publications in this field including *Enlightenment, Romanticism, and the Blind in France* (1987) and *Sentimental Education: The Complexity of Disenchantment* (1992). With *The Noise of Culture: Literary Texts in a World of Information* (1988), Professor Paulson began a long engagement with the then relatively new field of literature and science studies, using information theory and systems theory to elucidate the production of literary meaning. In *Literary Culture in a World Transformed: A Future for the Humanities* (2001), he argued forcefully for the importance of literature in a world of technological and environmental change. Paulson's extended thinking about the role of the humanities culminates in his recently completed *Thinking in Real Time*, a book manuscript that investigates the relationship of thought to time and new technologies.

Professor Paulson's teaching and service in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures have been exemplary. Perhaps his most significant institutional mark was made in the early 1990s when, as chair, he oversaw a series of curricular changes that allowed for a generational shift in the intellectual climate of the department, guaranteeing the overall modernization of the department's structures and administrative organization. To a large extent, the department is still reaping the benefits of the forward-thinking changes Professor Paulson made.

The Regents now salute this distinguished faculty member by naming **William R. Paulson, Edward Lorraine Walter Collegiate Professor Emeritus of Romance Languages and Literatures and professor emeritus of Romance languages and literatures.**

**Requested by:**



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**Sally J. Churchill, J.D.**  
Vice President and Secretary of the University

**May 2021**