

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Regents Communication

ACTION REQUEST

Subject: **Report of Faculty Retirement**

Action Requested: **Adoption of Retirement Memoir**

Sarah G. Thomason, Ph.D., Bernard Bloch Distinguished Professor of Linguistics and professor of linguistics in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, retired from active faculty status on May 31, 2021.

Professor Thomason received her B.A. (1961) degree in German from Stanford University and her M.A. (1965) and Ph.D. (1968) degrees in linguistics from Yale University. She was a lecturer in Russian and Slavic linguistics at Yale University from 1968-72. She joined the University of Pittsburgh faculty as an assistant professor of linguistics in 1973, and was promoted to associate professor in 1978 and professor in 1986. Professor Thomason joined the University of Michigan faculty in 1999, where she was named the William J. Gedney Collegiate Professor of Linguistics in 2001 and the Bernard Bloch Distinguished Professor of Linguistics in 2015. She chaired the Department of Linguistics from 2010-13.

Professor Thomason is the world's authority on language contact. Her books *Language Contact, Creolization, and Genetic Linguistics* (1988, with Terrence Kaufman) and *Language Contact: An Introduction* (2001) transformed the field of language contact through their theoretical and methodological rigor and insights. Her field-defining research has turned language contact today into a fertile area of linguistic inquiry. Professor Thomason is also a foremost authority in historical linguistics and her book *Endangered Languages: An Introduction* (2015) further established her as a key figure in the area of language endangerment. Her contributions to all these areas draw on her deep expertise in the Native languages of the United States, especially Séliš-Ql'ispé (Montana Salish), on which she conducted field work for 40 years, resulting in a Salish-English online dictionary. She has received numerous honors and lifetime achievement awards, which include the Wilbur Lucius Cross Medal from Yale University, being named fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and being elected president of the Linguistic Society of America. She has been a dedicated teacher and outstanding mentor to generations of undergraduate and graduate students.

The Regents now salute this distinguished faculty member by naming **Sarah G. Thomason, Bernard Bloch Distinguished Professor Emerita of Linguistics and professor emerita of linguistics**.

Requested by:

Sally J. Churchill

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

May 2021