

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Regents Communication

ACTION REQUEST

Subject: Report of Faculty Retirement

Action Requested: Adoption of Retirement Memoir

Juli Highfill, Ph.D., professor of Spanish in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, retired from active faculty status on May 31, 2023.

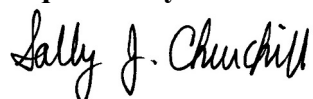
Professor Highfill attended the University of Kansas (Lawrence, KS) where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in history and social studies education in 1976. She then attended the University of Missouri (Kansas City, MO) where she earned her Master of Arts degree in 1982 and her Ph.D. degree in Spanish in 1993 at the University of Kansas. She joined the University of Michigan faculty as an assistant professor in 1993, and was promoted to associate professor in 1999, and professor in 2012.

Professor Highfill is a renowned scholar of nineteenth and twentieth-century Spain. Her main area of research is the avant-garde period of the 1920s and the political turn of the 1930s. She has authored two major monographs: *Portraits of Excess: Reading Character in the Modern Spanish Novel* and *Modernism and Its Merchandise: The Spanish Avant-Garde and Material Culture, 1920-1930*. Currently, she is completing a book titled *Images in Flight: Popular and Political Affect in Spanish Cinema, 1920-1940*. In *Portraits* she examines the cultural codes and belief systems that govern readers' imaginary stagings of literary characters. In her book, *Modernism and Its Merchandise*, she explores the incorporation of streamlined, mass-produced commodities of the Machine Age into the literary and visual works of the writers and artists of the Spanish avant-garde. This inquiry led to a dissonant but productive line of inquiry into the relations between mind and matter, people and things, and words and the world. In *Images in Flight*, she explores the cinematic experience in the 1920-1940s, a time when film as mass spectacle was still relatively new and writers of the Spanish avant-garde were preoccupied with what happens in the intimate yet public space of the movie theater. In her scholarly works, Professor Highfill demonstrates a deep and methodical focus on literary criticism that foregrounds the liveliness of the material while avoiding the descriptive superficiality that sometimes characterizes cultural studies. She incorporates many different fields, including literature, history, economics, material and popular culture, painting, film, fashion, and science, as well as pertinent theoretical approaches.

Professor Highfill is a two-time recipient of the Excellence in Teaching Award and the Excellence in Concentration Advising. She has been a remarkable teacher and dedicated advisor and mentor of undergraduate and graduate students. Her many service contributions include serving as RLL associate chair and head of the Spanish Curriculum Committee. She made exemplary contributions to RLL, particularly in the 1990s when she played a pivotal role in implementing the cultural studies track for the Spanish major. Her tireless efforts also resulted in a series of curricular changes that attracted majors and minors en masse to the field of Hispanic Studies. Her significant institutional mark is still evident today, as the department continues to benefit from her many contributions in the areas of curricular reform, student mentoring, and shared governance.

The Regents now salute this distinguished faculty member by naming **Juli Highfill, professor emerita of Spanish, Department of Romance Languages and Literatures**.

Requested by:



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

May 2023