UC SANTA BARBARA

THE Current

November 30, 2021
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A Transnational Treasure

In a career filled with accolades and honors, Sara Poot-Herrera has received one of special significance: the Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz medal at the 24th International Conference of Mexican Literature.

Poot-Herrera, a professor in UC Santa Barbara's Department of Spanish and Portuguese, is one of the leading scholars of Sor Juana, a 17th-century intellectual, writer, theologian, politician and artist. She received the prize at the University of the Cloister of Sor Juana in Mexico City. The conference was organized by UC Mexicanistas and the Spanish and Portuguese department.

"Receiving the Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz medal (so precious to me) in the year 2021 is a happy coincidence," she said. "It is 370 years since the birth of Sor Juana (1651), and 330 years since she wrote the most valuable document on the importance of women in mythology, history, science and the arts. She wanted to go to the university, a place forbidden to women, but she couldn't. Now, the University of the Cloister of Sor Juana, in the original and remaining site, is a thriving cultural and academic center."

Silvia Bermúdez, professor and chair of Spanish and Portuguese, called the honor a well-deserved recognition of Poot-Herrera's decades of scholarship and dedicated work on behalf of students and UCSB.

"As attested by this most recent recognition, Professor Sara Poot-Herrera is, both nationally and internationally, a prominent ambassador for UCSB," Bermúdez said.

“As one of the pillars of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese, she is a magnetic pull for our graduate program — having directed 32 dissertations as of today.

“Undergraduate students flock to her courses,” she continued, “covering all periods and genres of Mexican literature, from Indigenous cultures, colonial conflicts, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz to contemporary fiction and border studies. It is our privilege to count such an extraordinary colleague as our own. We proudly celebrate with you, Sara, congratulations, and ¡*Muchas felicidades*!”

In addition to participants of the colloquium, the Sor Juana award ceremony was attended by writers, students, friends and families, Poot-Herrera said, calling it “a night of great emotion and pride: me being from UCSB, seeing our university mentioned in Mexico City, at Sor Juana's house, with our 24th colloquium having been inaugurated with words written for the occasion by Chancellor Henry T. Yang, by Silvia Bermúdez, and presented there by the dean of the University of the Cloister of Sor Juana, Carmen López-Portillo, was unforgettable. Offering our students new reading proposals is exciting and makes us value our Hispanic Serving Institution even more so.”

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.