



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

April 25, 2016

Dear Bill Santiago,

This letter is to express the gratitude of the Spanish Heritage Language (SHL) Program at the University of Oregon and specifically the organizers of the Third Annual National Symposium on Spanish as a Heritage Language (SSHL). As you know, this conference brought together experts in the field of bilingual education for a three day community-oriented academic meeting that served as an intellectual forum for the discussion of the variable linguistic reality of Spanish heritage bilingualism in the United States and the diverse pedagogical needs of students of Spanish as a heritage language.

To this end, we invited two prominent scholars in the study of intergenerational heritage language maintenance: Dr. Jennifer Leeman, Associate Professor of Hispanic Linguistics at George Mason University, and Dr. Susana Rivera-Mills, Executive Associate Dean and Professor of Spanish Sociolinguistics at Oregon State University. Each speaker addressed the nature of heritage speaker bilingualism within different theoretical and practical standpoints, to critically evaluate the current state of our field, and to propose strategies to foster equity and inclusion through bilingual higher education. But, it was of the utmost importance to us to also invite someone outside the field of linguistics who would appeal not just to the educators and researchers present but also our students, the inspiration for our work.

As an artist whose work we use in our heritage classes with overwhelming success, you were our first choice for this third keynote and we were overjoyed when you accepted the invitation. I am happy to report that you met and exceeded our expectations. Your performance was the best attended of the three-day event, with over 300 students, teachers, researchers and administrators showing up. And, given that your slot came at the end of a jam-packed 12-hour day, we were overjoyed to see that our colleagues and friends were not just engaged, but laughing uproariously from start to finish. Of course, while we invited you with the need for a break from heady intellectual debate in mind, I don't want to diminish the importance of your work. Your performance, just like your book, proved essential in meeting our goal to provide a space to

DEPARTMENT OF ROMANCE LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

1233 University of Oregon, Eugene OR 97403-1233 T 541-346-4021 F 541-346-4030 uoregon.edu

An equal-opportunity, affirmative-action institution committed to cultural diversity and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

bridge the gap between research and teaching, allowing heritage educators and learners to reflect on their own identity formation within a context of validation and empowerment. One student wrote in a journal reflection written for class the following week of her joy upon entering the auditorium; she had never imagined so many people would attend an event celebrating the language she and her family speak at home every day, Spanglish.

Not only was your performance successful, it was spectacularly easy working with you in the months leading up to the Symposium. Your part of the event, thanks to your professionalism, seemed to practically organize itself. And your idea to have the University bookstore send a representative to offer your books for sale after the event created one of my favorite parts of the evening, the jovial line of old and newly formed fans waiting in line to get your signature and thank you for your representation of Spanglish here at the University of Oregon.

Thank you so much for participating in and making our event a success.

Heather Quarles

Assistant Organizer, Third Annual National Symposium on Spanish as a Heritage Language
Senior Instructor, Spanish Heritage Language Program, Department of Romance Languages
University of Oregon

DEPARTMENT OF ROMANCE LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES

1233 University of Oregon, Eugene OR 97403-1233 T 541-346-4021 F 541-346-4030 uoregon.edu

An equal-opportunity, affirmative-action institution committed to cultural diversity and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act