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Honorary Degree Award Citation for John Joseph Alfieri

Lawrence University

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Honorary Degree Awarded to Retiring Faculty

John Joseph Alfieri, Marie Wollpert Professor of Spanish

"John Joseph Alfieri, Lawrence University is both proud and grateful that you have spent your entire professional academic career here, and we honor you today for both the length and the quality of your loyal service. You did not come directly from New York, where rumor has it that you were the best shoe salesman along the banks of the Hudson, but rather--Ph.D. in hand--from Iowa. Your subtle wit and good humor, courtly manner and gentlemanly conduct--to say nothing of your devotion to the Packers--quickly endeared you to colleagues and students alike.

In these three decades you have taught Spanish with a passion that belies your modest demeanor. You have played crucial roles in establishing the Madrid Seminar and the program in Linguistics, and in recent years you have taught Italian with consummate skill and notable success. You are a demanding and rigorous teacher, be it of Spanish, Freshman Studies, Romance Linguistics, or Italian, and your expectations of excellence have earned you the community's respect and affection. You have also earned a place for yourself in the university mythology: after all, how many professors exhort their students to 'own a verb,' to 'seize adverbs,' or to 'squeeze the blood out of prepositions?' And when you have asked them to glue their eyes on a new and, to you at least, interesting grammatical form, that form has stuck with them. Your style has always been as inimitable as it has been effective, and generations of Lawrence students thank you for it.

Granted, no one has actually seen you chasing windmills on the campus green in front of Main Hall, but you have introduced hundreds of students to Don Quixote as you pursued your interests in medieval Spanish literature. In fact, you are a founding member of the Cervantes Society of America and have contributed to our appreciation of Spain's most renowned literary figure. The academic community knows you as an internationally-acclaimed scholar whose research and publications on the late nineteenth-century Spanish novelist Benito Perez Galdos have greatly increased our understanding of one of Spain's major writers. You are a scholar of reputation, and we applaud you for it.

Like your friends and colleagues Maurice Cunningham, Anne Jones, and John McMahon, you have helped to define a tradition of excellence in foreign language instruction at Lawrence. As is so often the case with the true friend and scholar and teacher, it is your kindness and dedication that linger in your student's memories side-by-side, of course, with a few irregular verbs. You are indeed a gentleman and a scholar, and we're glad you're a Lawrentian.

By the authority vested in me, I now confer upon you the degree of Master of Arts, *ad eundem*, and admit you to its rights, its privileges, and its obligations."

Citation read by President Richard Warch at Commencement, 1982