

September 17-18, 2014

**ITEM 164-1002-R0914**

**Authorization to Confer the Title of Professor Emeritus of Sociology on Robert Balch, University of Montana.**

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**THAT**

Upon the occasion of the retirement of Robert W. Balch from the faculty of the University of Montana, the faculty wishes to express its deep appreciation for his 42 years of dedicated and valued service to the University and the state of Montana by recommending that the rank of Professor Emeritus be conferred upon him by the Board of Regents of the Montana University System.

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**EXPLANATION**

Professor Balch earned his B.A. in Sociology from Arizona State University in 1966 and his M.A. in Sociology from Arizona State University in 1968. He joined the Sociology Department of the University of Montana in 1971, ABD, and earned his Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Oregon in 1972. He faithfully served in the Sociology Department until December, 2013.

Professor Balch is a very dedicated and popular teacher and student advisor. He taught classes in diverse areas such as Research Methods, Social Deviance, and the Sociology of New Religious Movements. He generously took on some of the largest courses offered at the University, including Introduction to Sociology, and his students appreciated his enthusiasm and knowledge of the subject matter. He is an expert New Religious Movements, and his courses in these areas continued to draw large numbers of students up until his retirement. He was perhaps best known for his dedication to engaging students in his ongoing field work. Every spring, his students had opportunities to participate in ethnographic research on New Religious Movements or deviant groups, and he often spent his spring break collecting data and instructing students in the study of such groups.

Professor Balch quickly established himself as an excellent scholar in the Sociology Department. His research on issues related to Criminology, New Religions, and Participant-Observation has been published in prominent psychological, criminological, and sociological journals and also in several books. He is well-respected nationally for his work on alternative religious groups, their organization, and the interpersonal interaction of their members.

In addition, Professor Balch excelled in the area of service. Perhaps his greatest service contribution can be seen in the significant administrative responsibilities he took on. For example, he chaired the Sociology Department from 1987 through 1991, led ASCRC's Social Science Subcommittee, and served for more than twenty years on the Interdisciplinary Guidance and Counseling Committee. The Sociology Department is unanimous in its recommendation that Professor Robert W. Balch be granted Emeritus status, which is duly warranted given his long record of distinguished service.

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**ATTACHMENTS**

No attachments

