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Tribute To Professor Vicki Palacios

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TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR VICKI PALACIOS

*Jennifer M. Collins**

IT is my great honor to introduce this tribute issue to the wonderful Vicki Palacios. Professor Palacios received her J.D. from the University of Nebraska College of Law and then held the Hastie Fellowship at the University of Wisconsin College of Law. Prior to joining the SMU Dedman School of Law faculty in 1991, Professor Palacios taught at the University of Utah College of Law and at Notre Dame Law School.

Professor Palacios has always been deeply committed to advancing the cause of justice and is an expert on the death penalty and sentencing issues. She served for eight years as a board member and then as chair for the Utah State Board of Pardons. She also served on the faculty for the National Institute of Corrections. Earlier in her career, Professor Palacios served as an Administrative Law Judge and Hearing Officer for state and federal Equal Employment Opportunity agencies.

After joining SMU, Professor Palacios taught courses in criminal law, constitutional criminal procedure, juvenile law, and the death penalty. She was instrumental in bringing an innocence clinic to the law school; one of the highlights of her career was working with law students to help free Steven Mark Chaney, who had served twenty-five years in prison for a murder conviction based almost solely on bite mark evidence. The judge ultimately agreed with Chaney's attorneys that this kind of evidence was no more than junk science.

Most important, Professor Palacios was absolutely devoted to her students. Students consistently praised her deep knowledge of her subjects, her passion for the material, and her compassion for her students. For example, one student gushed, "She is very passionate about the subject she teaches, and that shows in the way she discusses the material. It is clear that she has a great passion for many areas of the law and for many different types of people. She is truly kind and compassionate, and that is a great quality for a teacher to have. Professor Palacios always brings a great deal of humor to the classroom and is a positive presence every day." Another wrote, "I am such a fan of Professor Palacios. From her care and concern for her students to her outlook from living in a wide variety of places—she treats each topic with the intensity it deserves. I have so enjoyed being a student in her classes." Professor Palacios brought that same kindness and positivity to her relationships with faculty colleagues and her service work on behalf of the law school. Her

* Judge James Noel Dean and Professor of Law, SMU Dedman School of Law.

presence is sorely missed. I hope you will enjoy this tribute issue celebrating her remarkable legacy.