



IN MEMORIAM

Eugene Cota- Robles
Professor Emeritus of Biology
Academic Vice Chancellor, Provost of Crown College
1926 - 2012

Eugene Cota- Robles, a professor emeritus of biology at the University of California, Santa Cruz, who served in top administrative posts for UC and UCSC, died September 12 in Naperville, Illinois. He was 86.

Born in Nogales, Arizona, in 1926, Cota- Robles spent his childhood in Tucson. His parents had been elementary school teachers in Pueblo Nuevo, Sonora, before leaving Mexico for Arizona. After graduating from high school in 1944, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy, serving during World War II as a signalman aboard the heavy cruiser U.S.S. Baltimore in the Pacific. Following his 1946 discharge, he enrolled at the University of Arizona. Initially intending to become a dentist, he became fascinated with science and graduated with a B.S. in bacteriology in 1950. After a brief stint as a bacteriologist at Gerber Food Products in Oakland, California, he began his association with the University of California as a graduate student in microbiology at UC Davis. His research focused on the internal structure of *Azotobacter agilis*, a bacterium that can convert atmospheric nitrogen to amino acids. For the rest of his career he pursued the investigation of the structure of membranes and viruses in bacteria.

After completing his Ph D. in 1956, Dr. Cota- Robles moved to the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm, Sweden, supported by a U.S. Department of Public Health postdoctoral fellowship. It was there that he met his wife, Gun. Returning to the United States, Dr. Cota- Robles became an assistant professor at the University of California, Riverside. From 1970 to 1973, he had a brief hiatus from the University of California, serving as chairman of the Department of Microbiology at Pennsylvania State University. In 1973, Dr. Cota- Robles returned to the University of California, accepting the position of academic vice chancellor, a position he held until 1979, and professor of biology at UC Santa Cruz.

As academic vice chancellor, Dr. Cota- Robles served under four chancellors. During his administrative tenure, high priority was given to implementation of affirmative action at UC Santa Cruz, especially in academic areas, and the campus actively fostered programs for ethnic studies and for junior faculty development. Dr. Cota- Robles was also instrumental in merging academic planning with program budgeting and directed the completion of UC Santa Cruz's 1977-78 Academic Plan. From 1982 to 1986 he was provost of Crown College, and served as chair of the Council of Provosts.

"Gene's legacy in affirmative action at UCSC is legendary," said UCSC Chancellor George Blumenthal. "He wanted to create opportunities and open doors for students and faculty, and he had enormous influence here, throughout the UC system, and nationally."

Gene Cota- Robles was always available to help other people. He was approachable and had great "people skills." He made an immediate impression as a genuinely nice man.

In 1986 Cota- Robles moved to the Office of the President of the University of California as the assistant vice president, for academic programs. He oversaw and coordinated UC's affirmative action policies and programs for faculty development and for graduate and professional students. He also coordinated the university's faculty- based efforts to improve K-12 education, particularly in matters of teacher education. In recognition of his contributions toward advancing minority achievement at the University of California, the UC Regents named the Eugene H. Cota- Robles Fellowships for graduate students in his honor after his retirement in 1991.

Throughout his career, Cota- Robles was active in a wide range of programs at the national level to improve educational opportunities for minorities and underserved populations. Especially notable was his role as a founding member of the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS), later serving as its second president.

Cota- Robles was a member of the National Science Board (appointed by President Carter for the 1978-84 term), served on the board of trustees of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, and was a founding member and past president of the National Chicano Council on Higher Education. He also served as board member of the California Achievement Council and of MESA (Mathematics, Engineering, Science Achievement), a UC program aimed at encouraging minority students to pursue careers in science and engineering. After his retirement from UC, he served as a special assistant to the director of the National Science Foundation.

Cota- Robles is survived by his wife of 55 years, Gun Cota- Robles of Naperville, Ill.; daughter Feliciana Farran of Naperville; son Erik Cota- Robles of Mountain View, Calif.; and six grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his son Peter Cota- Robles and all 10 of his siblings.

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