

# Professor José Woldenberg Receives O'Donnell Democracy Award

by **Gabriela Ippolito-O'Donnell** and **Kevin J. Middlebrook**

The recipient of the Guillermo O'Donnell Democracy Award and Lectureship in 2020 is Professor José Woldenberg (Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, UNAM).

Professor Woldenberg holds degrees in sociology, Latin American studies, and political science (PhD) from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, and he has taught at the Facultad de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales since 1974. He is the author or coauthor of 25 books on elections, political parties, civic education, and the multiple challenges to democracy in Mexico and Latin America. He holds the highest rank (level III) in Mexico's Sistema Nacional de Investigadores.

Professor Woldenberg made historic contributions to electoral democratization in Mexico first as citizen councilor of the newly created Instituto Federal Electoral (IFE) in 1994–1996 and then as president of the legally autonomous IFE between 1996 and 2003. Under Woldenberg's leadership, the IFE established reliable procedures to ensure fair and open federal elections, and against the political odds he and his fellow councilors won broad, cross-party support for the IFE's institutional autonomy. The IFE thus created the conditions that permitted opposition parties to gain majority control of the federal Cámara de Diputados in 1997 and the presidency in 2000.

Since leaving the IFE, Professor Woldenberg has played a major role as both a leading academic and a prominent public intellectual in framing debates about democracy in Mexico. He has served as editor of *Nexos* (2004–2008), and he has coordinated two television series concerning the history of electoral democratization in Mexico and how democracy is perceived in different contexts.

In addition, Professor Woldenberg writes opinion columns for two of Mexico's most important newspapers and magazines, *El Universal* and *Nexos*. He is regularly consulted regarding electoral and democratic reform legislation under debate in the federal Congress.

For all these reasons, Professor Woldenberg is a most worthy recipient of the Guillermo O'Donnell Award and Lectureship.

The 2019–2020 selection committee members were Gabriela Ippolito-O'Donnell (Universidad Nacional de San Martín, Buenos Aires) and Kevin J. Middlebrook (University College London), co-chairs; Stéphanie Alenda (Universidad Andrés Bello, Santiago); Jonathan Hartlyn (University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill); and Jacqueline Peschard (UNAM). //