

May 25-26, 2017

ITEM 175-2701-R0517

Request authorization to confer the title of Professor Emeritus of English upon William Kamowski; Montana State University Billings

THAT

Upon the occasion of the retirement of Dr. William Kamowski from the faculty of Montana State University Billings, the faculty extends its appreciation to Dr. Kamowski for his 32 years of dedicated and valued service to the Department of English, Philosophy and Modern Languages, to the University, and to 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.

EXPLANATION

Dr. Kamowski's post-tenure application was reviewed last month by the DRTC. Their unanimous conclusion regarding Dr. Kamowski's meritorious achievements echo the positive evaluations he consistently received since the beginning of his career in this department in 1985. Dr. Kamowski earned the Winston and Helen Cox Fellowship for outstanding junior faculty member in the College of Arts and Sciences in 1990, and the qualities in his performance that were acknowledged early in his career blossomed over the next twenty-five years and more. Among his other recognitions, he earned the ASMSUB Outstanding Faculty Award in 1996 and 2000.

Consider this: in an unusual move for a veteran professor, "virtually all the literature" he assigned in his 400-level Major Authors course in Fall '16 he "had never taught" before, as his post-tenure narrative notes. This highlights his willingness to spend a significant amount of preparation time in order to work with literature both unfamiliar and appealing to our advanced majors. The student evaluation numbers and the student comments from this class demonstrate that his efforts proved successful. These remarkably favorable student evaluation numbers have been consistent over his teaching career at MSUB.

His student evaluation numbers from classes at all levels testify to his effectiveness as a teacher, with the scores in many categories approaching or even achieving perfection. Across the range of his courses and for over three decades, from classes on mythology to business communication, from British Literature to Senior Thesis / Capstone, Dr. Kamowski has demonstrated excellence in teaching, with admirable consistency. In his career at MSUB, Dr. Kamowski has taught over 25 different literature and writing courses that required over 25 distinct preparations.

Dr. Kamowski's rigorous scholarly work led to seven journal publications or book chapters on Geoffrey Chaucer, the British author of the *Canterbury Tales*. During his years at MSUB he presented conference papers on a regular basis at various venues, most notably seventeen times at the prestigious International Congress on Medieval Studies. He also chaired panels at the same conference five times: this indicates his scholarly peers hold him in high esteem.

His numerous book reviews in the *Billings Gazette*—a Chaucer scholar writing about cowboys!—in support of the High Plains Book Festival are meaningful writing contributions that straddle the category of service as well.

Within the past six years Dr. Kamowski has begun to transition from rigorous scholarly work to creative writing. The latter includes his essay on Elkhorn, Montana, blending personal experience with research and historical speculation, published in a journal on the contemporary west. (This essay, “Back to the Dream,” could be required reading in the Senior Thesis class as a long-form model of the students’ personal experience-based assignments.) His other recent writings include mystery fiction and science fiction stories, some already published, others under submission. As one colleague noted, these writings suggest “a very active mind [and] a creative spirit.” All his colleagues in the department look forward to the continued success of these efforts in Dr. Kamowski’s post-teaching writing career.

Since 1994 Dr. Kamowski has served as faculty advisor to the Student Senate, a task that requires regular late afternoon meetings on Mondays, communication with Senate members during the week, and attendance at retreats. It will be a major challenge for ASMSUB to fill this vacancy and to encourage a new advisor to get up to speed. In his role, one of Dr. Kamowski’s specific achievements was to help revive the *Retort* and support the efforts to make it a strong publication, which is a “great favor to the campus,” as one of his colleagues acknowledged.

Early in his career at MSUB, Dr. Kamowski established himself as a local expert in business communications with various workshops he conducted in our community. He directed four study-abroad trips for our students to Ireland, Wales, and England (in 2002, 2003, 2005, and 2007). Coordinating these trips required his preparations begin over six months in advance of each experience. The fact that he met the enrollment goals all four years indicates the positive word-of-mouth promotion provided by the students who participated.

Dr. Kamowski has been remarkably reliable when asked to carry out various tasks in our department, including chairing and participating on numerous search committees, scholarship committees, and most recently chairing the DRTC, leading the committee through eleven different reviews.

It is therefore the consensus of his colleagues in the Department of English, Philosophy, & Modern Languages that his numerous contributions as summarized above, as well as his substantial collegial role in the success of our department that has positively affected all of us, making Dr. William Kamowski eminently worthy of the designation of Professor Emeritus of English at Montana State University-Billings.

ATTACHMENTS

None