

May 26-27, 2021

**ITEM 194-1004-R0521**

**Request for Authorization to Confer the Title of Professor Emeritus on Deirdre McNamer, University of Montana – Missoula**

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**THAT**

Upon the occasion of the retirement of Deirdre McNamer from the faculty of the University of Montana, the faculty wishes to express its appreciation for her 26 years of service to the University and the State of Montana by recommending that the rank of Professor Emeritus be conferred upon her by the Board of Regents of the Montana University System.

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**EXPLANATION**

Professor McNamer earned her BA in Journalism here at the University of Montana in 1973 and then worked for over a decade as a journalist. She returned to her alma mater and earned her MFA in Creative Writing in 1987. Over the next several years she held Visiting Professor positions at the University of Oregon, Cornell University, the University of Alabama, Williams College, and here at the University of Montana. In 1998 she joined the English Department at the University as a full-time Associate Professor of creative writing. Seven years later she became Professor. When she retired in May 2020, she had been a crucial member of our creative writing program for over twenty years.

Professor McNamer was an engaged and deeply helpful teacher, widely respected by both her undergraduate and her graduate students. She primarily taught creative writing workshops in fiction, but her background in journalism allowed her to teach workshops in non-fiction as well, and she also taught a range of “special topics” courses designed for creative writing students: one of the most popular of these in recent years was a course titled “Women from the Sticks: Eudora Welty, Alice Munroe, Louise Edrich.” She devoted a great deal of time every year to supervising the theses of graduate students in the MFA program. She was a superb mentor of many students who have gone on to become accomplished writers and teachers.

Professor McNamer’s major publications are her five novels, all published with distinguished presses, all important works in the literature of the American West. She has also published many stories, essays, reviews, and pieces of journalism. Though primarily a novelist—the novel is the genre in which she has made her name—she has always been a versatile writer. Her most recent novel, *Aviary*, just came out this last year. Her work has helped to sustain the distinctive resonance of Mountain West fiction in the creative writing program at our University.

Over the years, further, Professor McNamer gave a great deal of time to both department service and broader professional service in her field. The MFA program in creative writing has long been a program of national distinction, as well as a relatively large program, and the work of admissions and recruitment every year is far from simple. Professor McNamer helped give this program its energy and shape over the years. She brought visiting writers here and gave her students connections in the wider literary world. She was a regular participant in local creative writing events and also served on some quite prestigious panels: she was Chair of the fiction panel of the National Book Award in 2011, for example, and Judge of the PEN/Falkner Award in 2014. We have been lucky to have her in our department all these years.

The English Department is very happy to nominate Professor Deirdre McNamer for emeritus status.

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**ATTACHMENTS**

No Attachments