

March 14-15, 2024

ITEM 211-1004-R0324

Request for Authorization to Confer the Title of Professor Emeritus of Department of Ecosystem and Conservation Sciences on Scott Mills; The University of Montana-Missoula

THAT

Upon the retirement of Scott Mills from the faculty of The University of Montana, the faculty of the Department of Ecosystem and Conservation Sciences wishes to express its appreciation for his 25 years of dedicated service to the University and 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. L. Scott Mills earned his Ph.D. at University of California (Santa Cruz), and in 1995 joined the UM Wildlife Biology Program as an Assistant Professor (with tenure home in Department of Ecosystem and Conservation Sciences, College of Forestry and Conservation). In 2013 Professor Mills was recruited as a Chancellor's Faculty Excellence Fellow ("Cluster Hire") in "Global Environmental Change and Human Well-Being" at North Carolina State University. However, 3 years later (in 2016), UM VP Research Scott Whittenburg recruited Dr. Mills back as UM's first Associate Vice President of Research and Creative Scholarship (and as a tenured Professor of Wildlife Biology to continue his research program and student mentoring with no teaching load).

Dr. Mills' teaching and research program helped pioneer the field of wildlife population ecology by bringing together, for the first time, multiple disciplines – from field ecology to population genetics to computational biology – in order to shed new light on how population dynamics of wild species are affected by human perturbations and potential management actions. From this perspective he has been an engaged and successful contributor to the undergraduate and graduate student teaching mission of UM (plus short courses globally), receiving the UM Most Inspirational Faculty Award (chosen by the UM Silent Sentinel Student Society) and the School of Forestry Montana Druids Faculty Service Award. He also was Keynote Speaker for the University of Montana Undergraduate Research Conference; Keynote Speaker for the UM Academic Convocation; Commencement Speaker for the College of Forestry and Conservation; and one of 3 Professors invited to speak in the first Provost's Distinguished Lecturer Series (in 2009). He has advised 30 graduate students (16 PhD, 14 MS). He has also mentored hundreds of undergraduates in Honors theses and experiential learning as part of his field research and laboratory/computational analyses (with a special focus on increasing engagement from combat Veterans and Native Americans). His applied wildlife population ecology textbook, now entering its 3rd edition with Oxford Univ. Press, has been widely embraced by >200 undergraduate and graduate (and practitioner training programs) globally.

Dr. Mills' research has been prolific and high-impact, crossing scientific disciplines and international borders to apply ecological and evolutionary science to wildlife conservation in a changing world. Some of his research-based awards include: a) National Science Foundation Early Career Award; b) John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship for his work in the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan; c) Fulbright Specialist Award for work in India; d) multiple invited scientific panels to evaluate conservation status of carnivores globally (as well as wolves in Montana and Wyoming). His >150 publications include 3 books and multiple articles in top cross-cutting journals such as *Science*, *Nature*, *PNAS*, and *ProcB*. His work has been cited >16,000 times, has been featured on the cover of at least 9 journals including *Science* and *PNAS*, and has been included in at least 20 textbooks in a diverse spectrum of disciplines. He has written as PI or co-PI more than 40 successful competitive grants totaling > \$10 million and engaging dozens of collaborators. His work

has a global footprint, with collaborations in >12 countries and across the U.S. plus numerous invited seminars and conference talks.

Dr. Mills has testified to the U.S. Congress on the role of non-invasive genetic sampling in endangered species science; advised the Western Governors Association on climate change effects on wildlife; served as member of the Board of Governors for the Society of Conservation Biology; and contributed to publications of the International Panel on Climate Change [IPCC] (including the Nobel Prize winning 2007 IPCC report). He has also served as an Associate editor for several journals, and as an invited proposal-evaluation panelist for agencies including National Science Foundation, EPA-STAR, and Swedish Research Council; further, he has organized and led workshops for both researchers and on the ground practitioners across the U.S. and the world. Mills' Board of Trustee service in a scientific capacity includes a) The Bhutan Foundation; b) Montana Nature Conservancy; c) Board of the Bhutan Ecological Society; and d) International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission and Lagomorph Specialist Group.

Service at the University level included many university committees (and faculty Senate) service over his years as a regular faculty member. In his capacity as UM's first Associate Vice President for Research (while also continuing as a tenured research-active academic-year faculty member), some of the more notable accomplishments include: a) a 5-year process of leading multiple interdisciplinary Research Councils of faculty across disciplines to capture comprehensive Research and Creative Scholarship (RCS) metrics, followed by building and implementing the "UM IMPACT" and "Funding Institutional" engines to collect and broadcast those cross-disciplinary RCS accomplishments; b) developing and implementing across campus the "Faculty Research Incentive Program" as an alternative to federally-terminated Research Base Salaries; c) Director of the O'Connor Center for the Rocky Mountain West; d) Direct the Research Development Unit of the Office of Research and Creative Scholarship; e) initiate a new annual competitive UM Faculty Grant Program ("Global Research Incentive Program"); f) help renovate UM's method of compiling Carnegie metrics related to R1-Research criteria; g) led development and updating of UM's "Covid safety guidelines for field researchers"; h) renovate space in 2 buildings at Fort Missoula to provide field storage space, improved lab space, and experimental facilities for captive wild mammals; i) service on multiple university and ORCS-based committees.

Finally, the high profile of Mills' work – with species including snow leopards, arctic fox, tigers, bighorn sheep, elk, coyotes, waterfowl, frogs, marmots and snowshoe hares – has been widely covered in media outlets including *The New York Times*, *David Attenborough's Life in Color Series* (in 2 Netflix episodes, 2021), *Nature*, *Science*, *The Atlantic*, *Newsweek*, *National Geographic*, *Science News*, *National Public Radio*, *the Nature of Things with David Suzuki*, *SciShow with Hank Green*, *BBC*, *The Weather Channel*, an upcoming (2024) Netflix film from Wildspaceproductions, and a stand-alone video on "Wildlife Adaptation to Climate Change" for *The Great Animal Orchestra Symphony* (premiered by the North Carolina Symphony, April 2016). Also, Sneed B. Collard III, an award-winning young adult book author, wrote a book specifically about Mills' research: "Hopping Ahead of Climate Change: Snowshoe Hares, Science, and Survival" (the book was covered in *Science* [2016 Dec. 9]).

The Department is pleased to unanimously and enthusiastically nominate Professor Mills for emeritus status upon his retirement in December 2023.

ATTACHMENTS

None