

May 15-16, 2024

ITEM 212-1603-R0524

Request for Authorization to Confer the Title of Professor Emeritus of Education upon Dr. Laura Straus; University of Montana Western

THAT

Upon the occasion of the retirement of Dr. Laura Straus from the faculty of The University of Montana Western, the faculty wishes to express its appreciation for her 17 years of dedicated and valued 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.

EXPLANATION

Dr. Laura Straus earned her Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from Claremont Graduate University in 2011. She joined the Education Department at The University of Montana Western as an instructor in 2007, moved to Assistant Professor in 2011, was promoted to Associate Professor in 2013, and achieved the rank of Full Professor in 2020.

Throughout her career, Dr. Straus's dedication to teaching excellence improved the lives of her elementary, middle, and college students. She was recognized as the 2002 Kansas Teacher of the Year as well as the 2003 Kansas History Teacher of the Year. Her carefully organized college courses provided in-depth knowledge of literacy pedagogy, challenging students to apply their learning through field-based opportunities like Rural Fridays and innovations within courses such as a place-based course in Seattle. Her commitment to student success was evident in her conscientious advising and engaged supervision of student teachers.

Dr. Straus' expertise in literacy was widely sought and recognized. She has presented at the American Educational Research Association, the American Association of College of Teacher Education, CEEDAR Cross-State Convening, and MFPE and Montana Literacy Conferences. Dr. Straus provided literacy professional development for in-service teachers across Montana and consulted with school districts on their K-8 reading programs. Her knowledge in the field of literacy development has been crucial to developing and maintaining the excellence of the UMW Education programs.

Leadership and service were hallmarks of Dr. Straus' career. She served as Interim Director of the School of Outreach, Division Chair of Education, Education Department Chair, Faculty Senator and CAEP Accreditation Lead, guiding and mentoring her colleagues through her various leadership roles. Dr. Straus's leadership on Project REAL (Rural Experience, Authentic Learning) and the Sprint Degree Partnership with Great Falls Public Schools leaves a lasting legacy, setting up these high-profile initiatives for continued success. She has impacted our local community and the practice of educators across the state through her work on the Southwest Montana Arts Council, Montana Small Schools Alliance, CEEDAR, and multiple Montana literacy initiatives.

Dr. Laura Straus has had an exemplary career at The University of Montana Western, the school where both her mother and sister graduated from. Her significant contributions to teaching, research, and service in literacy education and teacher preparation have had a lasting impact on her students, colleagues, and the literacy profession. For her dedicated and distinguished service, the University of Montana Western is pleased to recommend Dr. Straus for the rank of Professor Emerita of Education and wishes her well in this next chapter.

ATTACHMENTS

None