

May 29, 2014

University Tenure and Promotion Committee,

I am writing this letter to attest to the teaching skills of Dr. John Homer and recommend him for tenure.

I have known John since he came to ACU five years ago. I have appreciated him throughout that time for his interest in teaching, continual self-improvement, personal concern for students, and consistent pursuit of excellence in our department.

To his credit, John is one of those teachers who is always “tinkering” with his courses, always trying to improve them. He keeps up on the research literature for teaching computer science, and isn’t afraid to implement new ideas that have been proven to work, even if it means a great deal of time and effort on his part. Although he teaches a wide variety of courses in our department (and I believe he is especially valuable in SITC because he has the knowledge and ability to teach every course our department has to offer), he has spent a great deal of time working on our introductory course for Computer Science majors, CS120. John has stated on numerous occasions that he feels like the first-year courses are vital in developing skills that students will need later on. Because of this belief, John has adopted CS120 as his course and continually works to improve it. He has refined this course nearly every semester, based on feedback from the previous semester. He has asked various professors, including me, to sit in on a few class sessions and give him feedback. Several times, he has also called other professors together before the semester started to review course goals as well as drafts of final exams. His efforts have greatly improved the CS120 course, as it has slowly transitioned from a traditional lecture-style course to a flipped classroom model.

John’s classes are very interactive, as he spends much of the class time in two-way communication with the students. Students learn very quickly that he knows the material well and loves active dialogue, especially engaging student interests in the subject matter. He consistently encourages students to go beyond the text in exploring the material.

In our department, we have some students who can be difficult to work with. John has consistently shown willingness to take extra time to work with the students who need extra help and attention. Some students can be particularly frustrating, but John always treats them with the utmost respect and makes time for them in his schedule.

Each of the four degrees offered in our department has a faculty member primarily responsible for it, and John is the member primarily responsible for the Computer Science degree. He volunteered for this role and has constantly reviewed the entire curriculum for breadth and depth of coverage of relevant subject matter. As shepherding bodies within our discipline (such as ABET and ACM) have made suggestions about CS curriculum, John has evaluated these suggestions and at times championed valuable curriculum changes.

John Homer is a real cornerstone of our department and makes students, as well as fellow faculty members, better by his presence.

Raymond S. Pettit
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