

ABILENE CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

Educating Students for Christian Service and Leadership Throughout the World

School of Information Technology and Computing

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Brent Reeves
ACU Box 29319

July, 2014

Tenure and Promotion Committee
Abilene Christian University

Dear Committee:

I am writing to recommend that Dr. John Homer receive tenure. I have known John since he started teaching here in 2009. He is the kind of analytical teacher ACU needs.

Curriculum development. From the outside, the School of Information Technology and Computing (SITC) seems like a coherent department. On the inside it is not so... coherent. From the outside it appears that prerequisites for courses should be clear and that the various majors should draw from pretty much the same foundation. But the majors we support, Computer Science, Information Technology, Information Systems, and Digital Entertainment Technologies are in reality more different than the first glance suggests. The students in these majors are wired more differently than non-technical people understand. In order for SITC to grow, we must get the differences right; we must not mix apples and oranges at the prerequisite levels or we lose students. John has spent much time and energy helping us craft appropriate majors and then tweaking them as we move along. It is tedious and thankless work. I have never had a student say, "Thanks, Dr. Reeves – this curriculum is really well designed!" John's emphasis is Computer Science, our most rigorous and difficult major. He has worked to enable our department to grow all of our majors.

Course development. John's work on curriculum caused us to take a close look at our lower level courses. Several times now we have met for one or two days before the semester begins and reviewed in detail each of four courses' final exams. Each of us has a voice in the others' final exams, because each of us teaches upper-division courses that list those lower level courses as prerequisites. I don't know of any other departments on campus that put that kind of careful analysis into introductory courses and their outcomes. For each course, we ask, "What does it mean to get a 'C' in this course? How about a 'B'? An 'A'?" We usually spend a half day per class so we have ample time to reflect on course content and assessment. John has helped design and lead these sessions.

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Assessment. Since the department has been preparing for ABET accreditation, we have all worked on assessment. When a course claims to teach x, y, and z, how do we know those things got done? For John, this wasn't much extra work, because he is good at asking that question and has already done the work in his courses. As a proactive member of our department, he has been helping us ask good questions about assessment ever since he's been here.

Undergrad Research. John has reached out to undergraduate students and involved them in computer science research. His research assistants were co-authors on publications, not just ACU's research festival. We know that early involvement in research can alter a student's career. John is working successfully at one of ACU's major visions of undergraduate research.

Honors. Not only has John focused successfully on his own major – he has also co-taught Honors colloquia. For example Mike Daugherty from Physics and Rebecca Hunter from Biology. With titles like “Collective Intelligence” and “Programming the Zombie Robot Apocalypse”, he serves students from any majors wanting to take closer look at programming, the nature of intelligence, and free will.

These are some of the reasons I believe we should grant him tenure.

Sincerely,

Brent Reeves

Assoc. Professor of Computer and Management Science

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