

5 June 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

I am delighted to contribute a letter in support of Dr. John Homer's application for promotion to full professor. John is a rare bird in that he is simultaneously brilliant, collegial, and pastoral. Usually (to adapt the adage) it seems that you can only have two out of these three qualities in a person; the candidate in question excels in all three. This makes him, to my mind, precisely the sort of faculty member that ACU would want to retain and promote.

My assessment of John's brilliance springs primarily from the following fact: he is perhaps the most well-read person I know. Contra the stereotypes associated with his field, he is an avid bibliophile and deeply versed in the humanities. He is able to recite, on the spot, from a wide range of texts, from scripture to poetry to *Cavin and Hobbes* strips, and apply these to the discussion at hand. I don't know how much of this sort of thing bleeds over into the content of his classes but if our personal conversations are any indication, his students receive a tri-weekly treasure trove of wisdom of the ages. His ability to weave relevant literary anecdotes and historical tidbits into a given topic make him not only one of the most engaging conversationalists at our university but also an ideal fit for its liberal arts mission.

John is also an outstanding paragon of collegiality. Time and again I've observed that, when it comes to plans, he is a proactive instigator of social activities, rather than one who discusses without doing. For example, John and I kicked around the idea forming a book club for a year or two, but he was the one who finally got the ball rolling on it (and it's still going strong after six months). In our church small group, he proposed and followed through with the idea of a communal house project labor force. He can also be found at the weekly COBA (and monthly all-university) game lunches, and generally interacting with faculty across departments (me being an example; we've met for lunch several times and gone to a movie). Again, John bucks the cliché of a cloistered, antisocial computer scientist by being delightful and interesting to spend time with.

Finally, John's spiritual practices and pastoral influence on his students make him an ideal fit for ACU. This is the sort of area I wouldn't expect him to talk about, so I'm happy to do so. John is a thoughtful, humble, and practicing Christian. He attends church almost every time the doors are open. He frequently (and seemingly incongruously, until you see him in action) substitutes for our children's minister in leading children's church. In his personal life, he consumes devotional writings and is committed to spiritual disciplines. To John, the Christian walk isn't just window dressing or an aspect of ACU that he endures just to have a job, but the core of his life. He cares about the spiritual lives of his students; as evidence of this, he single-handedly hosted a semester-long chapel focused on the Christian virtue of humility. He is conscious of the example that he sets for his students and is intentional about their spiritual formation (one of his favorite short stories is a science-fiction piece about subtle and under-the-radar mentorship, and he once confided to me that that's the sort of effect he hopes to have on his students).

I consider Abilene Christian University lucky to have John Homer, especially as he so thoroughly embodies the virtues valued in a Christian institution of higher learning. I hope his application for promotion will be considered favorably.

Sincerely,

Dan McGregor, MFA
Professor
ACU Department of Art and Design