

September 20, 2022

Mark W. Hamilton
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Studies
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Dear colleagues,

It is an honor to write to you in support of Dr. Kelli Bryant Gibson's application for tenure and promotion at Abilene Christian University. She is a deeply respected member of our faculty, and I am grateful to call her a colleague.

At ACU, we evaluate faculty member's goodness of fit in terms of scholarship, teaching, service, and collegiality. These categories overlap and mutually reinforce each other, but they serve as a useful heuristic in our evaluation of an application such as this one. Let me comment on each area.

First, a scholarly mindset entails approaching the subject matter at hand with attention to detail and a view of larger implications, with deep awareness of prior discussions and imagination of new possibilities, and with diligence. Dr. Gibson exhibits all of those qualities, as her work in Syriac studies shows. That field is emerging as more and more manuscripts receive careful study and as new questions and methods arise. Dr. Gibson is at the forefront of translating newly available texts and interpreting them for her guild and indeed those of us in adjacent disciplines. She shows great promise for future work, building on the excellent publications she has already released or is completing.

Second, as a teacher, Dr. Gibson is truly admired and beloved by her students. She teaches with skill and joy, and her enthusiasm for Greek, church history, the history of Christian spirituality, and dialogue between Christians and Muslims are all contagious to students. They are also very important in their own right. When students speak of her, they do so with gratitude and admiration. She goes to great lengths as an advisor for the Master of Divinity degree and as a teacher so that the many different types of students we have (both domestic and international, both face-to-face and virtual) feel a part of the work of the Graduate School of Theology.

Third, one might argue that service is the most important thing a faculty member does. That service might be directed toward the scholarly guild, the university, the local community, or the church. Dr. Gibson's service to these areas is significant. She is growing in her work as a member of her scholarly guild, presenting at conferences and building relationships with colleagues. Her service on the Antioch Bible steering committee is important international-level work, as is her work on the steering committee for Syriac Studies at the AAR/SBL. These venues make room for service to her guild at the highest possible levels. At ACU, she serves on the faculty senate, and earlier served on other important committees, including the University's Academic Quality and Innovation Committee. That task force involved faculty, staff, administrators, and board members in University-wide strategic planning. In the GST, she has been at the forefront of ensuring good spiritual formation experiences for our students, especially through graduate chapel. For the church, she serves as a model not only for other women, but for men as well, in spite of the excessive and unreasonable constraints Churches of Christ place upon women. In every environment, she exhibits an exemplary combination of commitment to

service and good sense as she places her considerable gifts at the disposal of others for their betterment.

Fourth, the hardest element to quantify is collegiality, but it is among the easiest things to recognize. Certainly, it is in this case. Dr. Gibson unfailingly interacts with her faculty colleagues with grace, good humor, and a constructive approach to any problem needing attention. She treats students, staff, and fellow faculty members as persons who possess their own dignity and intrinsic worth. And she does this without surrendering her own dignity or sense of purpose. In short, she is an exemplary colleague.

To summarize, then, you should consider this letter of recommendation an enthusiastic vote of approbation for our colleague, Dr. Kelli Bryant Gibson. She is precisely the sort of person we should want at Abilene Christian University. She models the life of the mind submitted to the service and love of God that we wish to inculcate in our students. Please do not hesitate to ask if I can be of further assistance in your deliberations.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Mark W. Hamilton", is shown within a rectangular frame. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underneath the main text.

Mark W. Hamilton