
Tim Dooley
Acting Chair, Faculty Senate
University of Northern Iowa
Cedar Falls, IA 50614

March 27, 2026

Dear Faculty Senate Acting Chair Dooley:

I am pleased to provide this letter in support of Department of History Professor Ken Atkinson's application for emeritus status. Professor Atkinson has been a faculty member at UNI since 1999 and came to the Department of History in 2011, earning promotion to the rank of Professor in 2013. I believe Professor Atkinson's productive 27-year career at UNI as an exemplary teacher-scholar, an outstanding citizen of the department, and a student advocate warrant his recognition as an emeritus professor.

Professor Atkinson has had a strong, effective record as a teacher during his career at UNI. He has taught 19 distinct undergraduate courses during his career, with a remarkable breadth of topics of focus, ranging from The Historical Jesus and Mysteries of the Dead Sea Scrolls to The Cold War, Making the Modern World, and Conflict and Justice in History: Terrorism. He has also taught methods coursework in the History Master's program and been innovative in the curriculum design process, particularly within History's new online MA. Professor Atkinson has performed exceptional service in making his courses accessible and in a variety of formats. He has completed extensive professional development in online education, earning four certifications through Quality Matters to enhance his online pedagogy, and he has participated in dozens of campus workshops offered through the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. Professor Atkinson's courses are remarkably popular with students, in significant part because of his reputation for accessibility to students and his empathetic pedagogy. Student evaluations are resoundingly laudatory of the care and concern he exhibits for his students. They praise his responsiveness, his availability, and his willingness to work with students to ensure their success in his classroom, also recognized by the Helping Students Succeed Commendation through the Division of Student Affairs in 2017. Students also remark regularly on his expertise and his enthusiasm for his subjects.

That expertise is clearly evident in a review of Professor Atkinson's scholarship, for which he earned UNI's prestigious James F. Lubker Research Award in 2023, the Donald N. McKay Faculty Research Award in 2008, and the Distinguished Scholar Award in 2006. His scholarly output has been prodigious, having produced 8 books, 3 co-edited volumes, 45 scholarly articles, 28 book chapters and conference proceeding publications, and more than 70 encyclopedia entries. He published *An Intertextual Study of the Psalms of Solomon* with the Edwin Mellon Press in 2001, *Introduction to World Religions* with The College Network in 2002, *Judaism* with Chelsea House in 2004, *I Cried to the Lord: A Study of the Psalms*

of Solomon's Historical Background and Social Setting with Brill in 2004, *Queen Salome: Jerusalem's Warrior Monarch of the First Century B.C.E.* with McFarland in 2012, *A History of the Hasmonean State: Josephus and Beyond* with Bloomsbury T & T Clark in 2016, *The Hasmoneans and Their Neighbors: New Historical Reconstructions from the Dead Sea Scrolls and Classical Sources* with Bloomsbury T & T Clark in 2018, and *Empress Galla Placidia and the Fall of the Roman Empire* with McFarland in 2020. He has published additional scholarship with leading presses in his field, ranging from Walter de Gruyter and Routledge to Yale and Oxford University Presses. He is recognized by his peers as eminent and distinguished, with invitations to speak at conferences nationally and internationally and authorship of 42 book reviews. Professor Atkinson is currently working as editor to finish *The Oxford Handbook of Josephus* with OUP and a series of article manuscripts. That he has produced this volume of meaningful scholarship while giving such time and care to his teaching and service activities is extraordinary, and his ability to contribute to all three major areas of faculty performance was recognized by his receipt of the Iowa Regents' Award for Faculty Excellence in 2008.

Professor Atkinson has developed an outstanding record of service at UNI. He has regularly shared his research and his Cold War experiences in the military with the local community, through public talks and courses, guest lectures, and school visits. Professor Atkinson has served as a grant reviewer and assessment coordinator for national and regional agencies and has provided more than a decade of valuable service on the Arts and Sciences Advisory Committee at Hawkeye Community College and UNI's Transfer Council Committee. He served as a member of the Committee on Academic Program Review at the University level at UNI and on the Social Sciences Teacher Education Committee for the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. He also worked extensively with the Veteran Student Services Assessment Committee. At the department level, his service has also been extensive: on search committees, as a member of the Curriculum and Graduate Studies Committees, and as PAC Chair, to name a few roles. His tireless efforts in support of the Department of History's new online MA program deserve special mention. The program, which launched last fall after three years in development, exceeded all expectations by enrolling 30 students in its first semester and a half. Ken carefully crafted this program, from the Board of Regents Form A through its flexible curriculum and online course template to its assessment plan. The program is a marvelous legacy and a testament to his dedication and creativity in communicating the value of History education at the graduate level for teachers and other working professionals.

Based on his record of distinguished accomplishments as a UNI faculty member, I enthusiastically support Professor Ken Atkinson's application for emeritus status. I have valued his collegiality and dedication to the department, and it has been a great pleasure to work with him. This recognition will serve as a fitting celebration of Professor Atkinson's distinguished career and his commitment to his fields of study, his faculty colleagues, and his students.

Sincerely,



Jennifer McNabb
Professor and Head of the Department of History