

April 14th, 2022

Dear Members of the Faculty Senate:

It is an honor to write in support of Dr. John 'Henry' Owusu's application for emeritus status, highlighting his many accomplishments and reflecting on his steadfast commitment to mentoring departmental colleagues. After twenty-two years as an Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and full Professor at UNI, Dr. Owusu will retire at the end of this semester. I would like to speak in detail about three areas, among Dr. Owusu's many other accolades, that are representative of his commitment to the profession, the university/college/department, and to his colleagues: his research record, his LAC teaching contributions, and his commitment to mentoring colleagues.

Dr. Owusu's research record is impressive in terms of the volume of contributions and their overall impact. Over his career he has published thirteen refereed journal articles/book chapters. In 2012, Dr. Owusu published *Africa, Tropical Timber, Turfs, and Trade: Geographic Perspectives on Ghana's Timber Industry and Development* as a Rowman and Littlefield book. Reviewers noted that his book was 'impressive', 'distinctive' and a 'must-use resource' for research and teaching. His body of work has established Dr. Owusu as a leading expert on economic development and resource management in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Through excellent teaching and dedicated mentoring, Dr. Owusu's career at UNI is characterized by his record of fostering and advancing student success. This is evident in the upper division/graduate courses he developed and taught, and well as via LAC classes. He regularly taught in two LAC categories with consistent offerings of 'Human Geography' and 'Africa'. These courses reached undergraduate students in all majors and all points in their student career to include first-year students, graduating seniors, and a dedicated Honors section of the 'Africa' course. As a fellow 'Human Geography' instructor I appreciated the particular focus and expertise that Dr. Owusu brought to his course, dedicating considerable time to the concept and construct of 'culture' in all its many diverse and myriad forms.

I arrived to UNI in 2005 as a brand new Assistant Professor, starting in a department where I was the only tenure-track faculty member. I am so very fortunate that all of my colleagues were always supportive, but none more so than Dr. Owusu. From the moment I interviewed and then arrived on campus, to the year I requested consideration for promotion and tenure, to my earning the rank of full Professor two years ago, Dr. Owusu has been kind, helpful, encouraging, and professional through every different stage of my

career. This includes a particular attention to detail and process as a member of the PAC as well as the many times he informally stopped by my office to offer encouragement or congratulations, for accomplishments large and small, and at times when he sensed that I was worried, dispirited or struggling. I know that his goodwill towards me was not unique and that he has provided the same mentoring and support to other colleagues as they progressed through the process from being new hires to newly tenured and/or promoted faculty members.

In consideration of Dr. Owusu's research accomplishments, teaching contributions, and commitment to mentoring—along with so many other achievements and accolades not mentioned in this letter—I wholeheartedly and enthusiastically recommend that he be granted the status of Professor Emeritus.

Sincerely,



Alex Oberle, PhD
Professor
Department of Geography
University of Northern Iowa