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19 February 2024

Dear Members of the Faculty Senate:

It is an honor to write in support of Jeffrey Copeland's request for emeritus status as the coda to a 42-year career at the University of Northern Iowa. Jeff was the person who hired me, and he has been a mentor to me throughout my career, both as a faculty member and as an administrator. He is a recipient of the Regents Award for Faculty Excellence whose career has featured notable accomplishments in the fields of English Education as well as Literary Nonfiction, and his 17-year term as the Head of the Department of English Language & Literature and then the Department of Languages & Literatures represents a record of administrative longevity that is unlikely to be matched.

Jeff's main area of expertise is Young Adult Literature, and more than one generation of UNI pre-service teachers have benefitted from his wealth of knowledge in that field. Memorably, when my wife and I first arrived in Cedar Falls, and brought our then-young son with us to Jeff's office, our son was mesmerized by the array of children's books on the shelves of Jeff's office. When Jeff presented our son with a book he could keep, our son began to refer to Jeff as "the King of Books."

"The King of Books" was an earned title in other ways as well. Initially, Jeff focused on scholarly work on young adult literature as well as the creation of textbooks for teachers. He published over a dozen textbooks including the long-running series, *Glencoe Literature: The Reader's Choice*. As both author and editor for that series, he produced a comprehensive Language Arts textbook with individual editions for grades six (6) through ten (10) and area-focused books for grades eleven (11) and twelve (12), in addition to state-specific editions for Texas and California.

In 1993, he was tapped to serve as Interim Department Head in English Language & Literature, asked to take over during a tumultuous period in the department's history. His appointment soon became official, and he would go on to be one of the longest serving heads at UNI. He shepherded one of the largest departments on campus during periods of both growth and retrenchment, and his service included a three-year term as the chair of the Council of Academic Department Heads from 2005-08. He also kept the ship on course during the challenging time of the forced merger that created the

Department of Languages & Literatures, and his ability to work well with a wide array of personalities was never more important.

All of that would be enough for one person, but perhaps the most remarkable thing about Jeff's career has been his work in Literary Nonfiction that has been the hallmark of the latter half of his time at UNI. Drawing on unique reserves of energy and enthusiasm, Jeff began to immerse himself in research-intensive projects on underreported stories of individuals throughout American history. This process began with 2006's *Inman's War: A Soldier's Story of Life in a Colored Battalion in WWII*, a retelling of a forgotten chapter at the end of the period of military segregation that was nominated for five national awards and had film rights optioned. Jeff has gone on to write over a half dozen similarly research-intensive books on topics ranging from the civil rights movement and abolitionism to a modern outbreak of the bubonic plague in the United States and labor strife within the once-burgeoning Iowa button industry. This remarkable output was one of the reasons why Jeff was selected for the Regents Award for Faculty Excellence in 2015.

Throughout his entire career, Jeff has remained a charismatic and inspirational instructor. In fact, I would go so far as to say that of all his career achievements, his most impressive have been in the classroom. Students regularly identify his classes as ones in which they work the hardest and come away with the greatest satisfaction. He has both a showman's ability to control the stage and an educator's concern for individual student achievement, and his lasting impact is felt in school districts throughout the state and the nation.

During his 42-year career, Jeff Copeland has left a legacy in the training of Iowa's teachers and in the mentoring of UNI faculty. While I am glad to congratulate him on a meritorious career and thank him for his dedication, I will miss his regular presence on campus for casual hallway conversations, more serious administrative consultations, and less serious anecdotes from one of the best storytellers I know.

Please accept this letter recommending Jeffrey Copeland for the position of Emeritus Professor. He represents the best of the scholar/teacher model, and his career has been an unforgettable one.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim O'Loughlin". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Department Head