

January 10, 2020

Memo: The Faculty Senate

Re: Statement of support for Dr. Joel Haack's application for faculty emeritus status

On behalf of the Department of Mathematics, I wish to submit this statement in support of Dr. Joel Haack's request for faculty emeritus status. Dr. Haack will retire on June 30, 2020, ending 29 years of service to UNI.

After a 12-year stint on the faculty of the Department of Mathematics at Oklahoma State University, Dr. Haack came to UNI in August 1991 as head of the Department of Mathematics and Computer Science. For Dr. Haack this marked the start of a career trajectory at UNI that had many twists and turns. As had been planned, the department he had been hired to lead split into the two separate departments of Mathematics and Computer Science in 1992. In the ensuing 26 years, Dr. Haack served UNI in various capacities. He was head of the Department of Mathematics from 1992-2000, then interim dean of the College of Natural Science (CNS) from 2000-2001, then returned to the faculty from July 2001- December 2004, then went back again to serve as interim dean of CNS from January 2005- June 2006 and, following a national search, he became dean of CNS and served from July 2006 – July 2011. Dr. Haack also served as dean of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts (CHFA) from January 2010 – June 2011 when a decision to merge CNS and CHFA was made. From July 2011- December 2014, he served as the inaugural dean of the College of Humanities, Arts and Sciences. He was given release time from January 2015 – December 2015, after which he returned to the faculty on phased retirement in January 2016.

As I hinted at above, in his time at UNI, Dr. Haack found himself at the center of two seismic changes in the units under him. The first was the splitting of the department he had been hired to lead into the separate departments of Mathematics and Computer Science. He assisted in the process, which took all of his first year at UNI to complete. The second was the merger of CNS and CHFA. The latter was an especially challenging process. Thanks to hard work of the committees and workgroup that formed to work on the merger, Dr. Haack's leadership skills, steady hand, cool-headed manner, patience, willingness to consult and listen to all stakeholders, the merger was implemented with minimal difficulties.

In an article in the 2015-16 edition of the Department of Mathematics newsletter, the Wright Message, Dr. Haack identified three big initiatives the department implemented under his leadership in the 1992-2000 period. These initiatives set a new direction for the department whose impact is still being felt to this day. The first was the adoption of a reformed calculus textbook which incorporated the use of graphing calculators as an essential part of the content delivery. The initiative catapulted the department to the forefront of a nationwide movement to focus Calculus education on understanding rather than on mechanical applications of formulas. The second was an overdue review of the undergraduate curriculum, which resulted in the creation of a mathematics common core consisting of Calculus I, Calculus II, Calculus III and

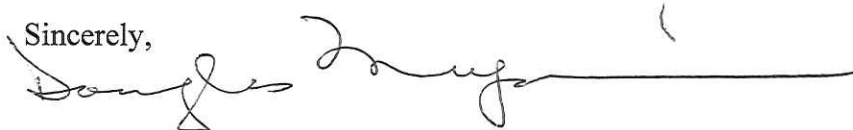
Linear Algebra, which all majors in the department are required to take. This initiative made the department curriculum more current and brought it into alignment with national trends. The third initiative was the creation of a mathematics master's program for Middle Grades Teachers with the goal of providing much needed professional development to Iowa teachers. Last, but not least, Dr. Haack noted that the department was successful in hiring its first choice in 11 straight faculty searches in the same eight-year period. Though he will soon be retiring, his legacy will live on for years to come.

While Dr. Haack spend most of his tenure at UNI as an administrator, he has had a long and abiding passion for teaching. With academic training in both mathematics and statistics, he is fluent in both disciplines. His mathematics, mathematics history, and statistics courses have been some of the most popular courses in the department every time he has taught them. Also, as an illustration of his commitment to teaching, in Fall 2019 Dr. Haack volunteered to teach two large sections of the Introduction to Statistical Methods course, which were too large to meet in Wright Hall and had to be moved to the Curris Business Building to accommodate the size. This is all the more remarkable given that Fall 2019 was Dr. Haack's last semester of teaching. If this is not total commitment, I don't know what is.

Beyond the classroom and his administrative duties, Dr. Haack has served the profession in various capacities. He has served on some very important communities of the Mathematical Association of America (MAA), including as a member of the Board of Governors for the MAA, chair of the Science Policy Committee, and chair of the Audit Committee. He is a renaissance man, a true patron of music and the arts and he has traveled the world over, and above all, he has found ways to bring all of his life experiences to his classes. Those of us who have known Dr. Haack have marveled at his ability to connect with his students and at his enduring commitment to them beyond graduation. He stays in touch with many former students and can be counted on to share with other faculty members where these graduates are now and how their professional careers are going. It is the rare faculty member who gets this invested in the lives of his or her students. Dr. Haack set the bar high for all of us.

I wish Dr. Haack the best as he embarks on the next chapter his life in retirement. I strongly support his request and urge the senate to grant him faculty emeritus status.

Sincerely,



Douglas Mupasiri, Ph.D.  
Head and Professor