

8/2/2020

Letter in support of Emeritus status for Ken McCormick.

Ken joined the Department of Economics at UNI in 1982. Ken was and will continue to be one of the most respected faculty members in the Economics Department and the College of Business Administration at UNI.

I met Ken when I joined the Economics Department as the Head of the Department in 2017. Ken's reputation as an amazing teacher and scholar preceded him. He was also known to be a straight talker and unafraid to express his opinions. Given that I would be someone coming in from the outside as a department head, I was a little intimidated at the prospect of having someone like Ken as a faculty member in my department. I was nervous about his acceptance of me. However, it so happened that Ken was one of the members of the search committee when I was hired. He went out of his way to make me feel welcome and bring me up-to-speed with things I needed to know to be able to do my job better. He never made me feel like I was struggling to hop onboard a ship, instead he extended a helping hand and pulled me onboard. He was also one of those people who told me that he would be willing to teach any classes that I needed to offer. In other words, Ken was the kind of faculty member every department head wishes for. I will always remain grateful for his support and friendship.

Ken exemplified the teacher-scholar model. He received several teaching awards over the years including the prestigious Regents Award for Faculty Excellence in 1993. As a teacher, Ken was one of the most highly-regarded teachers in the College of Business Administration. In 2001, Ken's teaching was recognized with the Class of 1943 Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching. Ken taught 12 different courses in his 37 years at UNI. His work on ancillaries for the introductory textbooks authored by N. Gregory Mankiw has influenced millions of students across the globe, as the Mankiw textbook is the top-selling introductory textbook in economics, with total sales estimated at above 2 million.

Ken received three National Endowment for the Humanities grants for "The Works of Adam Smith" as a part of summer seminars for schoolteachers. Ken's influence on UNI economics majors will continue after his retirement in the creation of "Major Themes in Economics," a collection of the top student research papers written in his Directed Research course each year. Ken valued clear and concise writing and shared this passion with his students.

It is hard to say whether the countless hours Ken spent in preparation to teach that made him such a good teacher or whether the time and effort he put into preparing for his classes were an outcome of him being such a fabulous teacher. Ken was a fanatic about preparation and organization. He would finish writing his lecture notes for the entire semester prior to the first day of class, for all his classes, new or old. He would do this to ensure that he would never have to throw together a lecture at the last minute and guarantee that he would give each presentation the careful preparation that he believed it deserved.

Ken co-authored research papers with most members of the Department of Economics over the years. This is a testament to his collegiality, clear writing, and clear thinking. Ken authored four book chapters,

almost 30 peer-reviewed journal articles, and many other scholarly writings. His book *Veblen in Plain English: A Complete Introduction to Thorstein Veblen's Economics* received excellent reviews and led to an appearance on the Bob Edwards Show (XM Satellite Radio, July 30, 2007). The book was translated into Korean and published there in 2020 by Chungnam Publishing Company.

Over the years Ken provided numerous hours of dedicated service to the Economics department, the College of Business Administration, and University of Northern Iowa. In recent years he made a major contribution by serving on the General Education Revision Committee.

Here are a few words about Ken from a colleague.

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From Lisa Jepsen:

I will be forever grateful to my former department head, Fred Abraham, who assigned Ken McCormick to be my mentor. Were it not for this formal role, I would have been intimidated to reach out to Ken. Ken was a great teacher and a deep thinker with a passion for Thorstein Veblen and the band Sabaton. I asked for his feedback on a chapter of my dissertation. Ken was gracious with his time and direct with his suggestions -- he took scissors and tape to my paper. I am not kidding. I still have the hard copy. His substantive edits were instrumental in my publishing that paper in a highly-respected journal, and that paper has more citations than anything else I've published.

Ken quickly became a close friend. He was and still is my go-to resource for teaching tips, research questions, and general help with life. I will miss seeing him in the hallways, as will my colleagues and our students. I wish him the best in his well-earned retirement.

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I would like to end by saying that Ken loved his job and he was excellent at it. In Ken's own words, "Being a tenured professor at UNI is better than winning the state lottery." But I think we were the lucky ones in getting someone like Ken to work with us and touch all our lives in very special ways.

The department and students will certainly feel Ken's absence. I will miss seeing Ken, his insight, his quirky and dry humor, and his loud laughter in the hallways.

Ken McCormick has my highest support for his well-earned Emeritus status.

Thanks and regards,



Shar Self  
Professor and Head of the Department of Economics  
Head of the Department of Finance