

March 20, 2024

Emeritus Standing

Nomination for: **Dr. Ira Simet**

Dr. Ira Simet has been at UNI since 1986. He is an extraordinarily gifted teacher who has set the standard for excellence in our department. He brings a joy and enthusiasm into the classroom that students find catching. His infectious enjoyment has always come with high expectations for student learning. This is notable because he regularly teaches courses such as Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry that students take who are interested in careers in medicine. The material is challenging and, for the students, high stakes because they need to master this material in order to enter their chosen field.

Our students who go on to medical school regularly report that they felt very well prepared for the rigors of the medical program, particularly as regards their understanding of Biochemistry. And, indeed, all our Biochemistry majors who choose to apply to medical school have been accepted. Their success is due in no small part to Dr. Simet's teaching and guidance through the application process.

When Dr. Simet arrived at UNI, there was no Biochemistry program. He created the program and developed its lecture and laboratory courses. As the program has expanded, we have added faculty and Dr. Simet has mentored them in their teaching so that they were able to feel well-grounded and be successful early in their careers. Dr. Simet has been a mentor to most of our faculty regarding teaching tricks, techniques, and ideas regardless of the topic. He is himself well versed in how to approach a stunning variety of classes: Biochemistry I, II and Lab, but also Organic Chemistry I, II, and Lab, General Chemistry I and II, as well as Applied Organic & Biochemistry, and an older course no longer taught, Introductory Physiological Chemistry. From time to time, as recently as Fall 2022, groups of students push to have him teach advanced or special topics. The topics covered in these advanced courses have included Signal Transductions and Apoptosis, Plant Biochemistry (with Virginia Berg), and Genetically-based Diseases. He has taught these as an unpaid overload – just for the love of helping his students wrestle with exciting new ideas.

I mentioned that he is generous with his time as a mentor to other faculty members. He is also always available to students. He has students constantly go in and out of his office. Sometimes for course help, sometimes for career guidance, and not infrequently, just to talk and share ideas. He has supervised over 50 undergraduate students in research plus two high school students. Often this is in summer as a voluntary activity. He has also supervised several students in senior honors projects or honors supplements to his courses.

Dr. Simet has been our go-to super expert on the process of applying to and getting accepted at medical schools. Because pre-med is a popular focus, he has a larger group of advisees than many of our department faculty. Typically, he has about 12 advisees, but that has occasionally ballooned up to 25 advisees. He writes letters of recommendation for all of these students plus additional students from his courses. His letters are thoughtful, detailed, honest and powerful assessments of the student's potential.

I am delighted to support Dr. Ira Simet for emeritus status. His retirement is well-deserved, though we anticipate he will remain active in our department community as an emeritus faculty member.

Sincerely,



William S. Harwood
Professor and Head