



**Oregon State
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Dear Dean Williams,

It is true that Dr. Marcos Norris is committed to the humanistic ideals of Higher Education—to genuine intellectual growth, to the development of critical thinking and civic character through open inquiry across diverse disciplines, and to the cultivation of knowledge that informs practical wisdom. There is a difference, however, between being committed to humanistic ideals and being committed to their enactment. The latter is substantially more difficult. There are manifold pressures—financial, political, and cultural—that make it more attractive to simply profess affinity for such principles, while eschewing the gritty and often precarious labor needed to steward them into existence. I can say with confidence that Marcos Norris is committed not only to the humanistic ideals of Higher Education, but also and more importantly, their enactment. Through his teaching and service, as well as through his research, Dr. Norris exemplifies a pedagogical philosophy that, candidly, we could use more of in the academy. I recommended him, wholeheartedly and without reservation, for promotion to Senior Instructor I. My endorsement echoes that of our School's Promotion and Tenure Committee, who unanimously and enthusiastically recommend his promotion based on the strength of his dossier.

Norris presents with a robust teaching portfolio of WR and ENG courses, primarily ENG 104: Introduction to Literature: Fiction and WR 323: Advanced Writing and Argumentation. Within these foundational courses—which reach a broad cross-section of the student body as popular Core Ed/Bacc Core options—Norris has evolved and refined his approach to engage students on essential topics that challenge them to grow as intellectuals and literary citizens. It's worth noting that Norris began his employment at Oregon State in an especially messy moment, when the COVID-19 pandemic was evolving into an endemic presence and we returned to campus under surreal conditions; when racialized tensions inflected all debates; and when public trust in our educational institutions was under enormous strain. Teaching in this moment was challenging for even the most seasoned of educators, but it was a particularly demanding time for new faculty charged with instruction of high-volume general education courses focused on core cultural issues and critical literacies. As his candidate statement illustrates, the educational expectations and preparedness of our students is undergoing seismic shifts in response to

societal turmoil. Norris, I can recall distinctly, navigated these choppy waters with integrity and skill, though that's not to say without apprehension and hardship.

Norris's response to these challenging conditions deserves much praise. He doubled-down on his commitment to educational inclusivity, engagement with viewpoint diversity, and the necessary, if sometimes unwelcome, inquiry into the axioms of culturally sensitive topics. He restructured his classes to skillfully and steadily guide students into a learning atmosphere that pursued, as he puts it, "true intellectual growth"—that which is achieved not "by having your beliefs, values, or ideological commitments reinforced," but rather by "grappling with perspectives that differ from your own—arguments, hypotheses, and even fictional narratives that thoughtfully challenge your beliefs." This kind of engagement requires thoughtful preparation and careful curricular maneuvers to ensure students are animated by the challenge and feel supported in their journey. Norris has done just that with his pedagogical evolutions, introducing a scaffolded series of assignments, discussions, and readings that build upon one another to expand not just their skill sets in reading and writing, but their intellectual horizons.

Student evaluation letters speak to the efficacy of his efforts. "This class [WR 222] was very difficult," one student writes, "in the sense that my peers and I were challenged daily to think critically and from different perspectives." Although this student considered "writing [to be] one of my stronger subjects in school," this class "really provoked challenges and forced me to go outside my comfort zone." Another student describes that Norris's ENG 104 classroom was "one of inclusivity, accessibility, and collaboration," adding that Norris "cares enough for his students to create an interactive classroom that welcomes opinions and perspectives." Tellingly, they note that "I never completed busy work, as all his assignments served a purpose." Norris's peer-observations echo the same, with his Teaching Evaluation Letter affirming that his pedagogical innovations have led to improved student participation and "more meaningful reflection" in both on-campus and Ecampus instruction.

Following the sudden departure of a faculty member responsible for teaching ENG 221: African American Literature, Dr. Norris stepped up to help cover a gap in our curriculum. He not only welcomed the course into his rotation of courses, he displayed significant leadership in shepherding the course through the Core Ed evaluation process, redesigning the Ecampus shell, and taking the requisite trainings in Difference, Power, and Oppression. I am personally grateful for Norris's efforts on this front, as he brought a spirit of collegial camaraderie and disciplinary expertise at a crucial moment.

Norris's service record is equally strong, boasting substantial and valuable involvement at multiple levels. Notably, he has served on multiple University-level committees,

representing Oregon State on the Common Course Numbering English Subcommittee and also, by invitation, contributing to the Remote Course Pilot Program. Within the School, Norris has been steadfast contributor across an array of appointments. I wish to call attention to his involvement with the Core Ed Advisory Committee, as this group was particularly helpful in organizing people, material, and insight for the transition to a new Gen Ed model. He has also written and starred in videos for the *Oregon State Guide to Literary Terms* series on SWLF's YouTube channel, which has a nationwide reach and is a potent source of public humanities outreach. Norris was also selected as a Public Voice Fellow in The OpEd Project, a professional development program that mentors faculty in developing public-facing opinion pieces—yet more evidence of his engagement with humanities beyond the classroom.

Although research is not part of Dr. Norris's position description, I would be remiss to not celebrate his truly incredible record of scholarly achievements while teaching full time. His publication output rivals that of any Assistant Professor on the tenure track, with one monograph, *Hemingway and Agamben*, and two edited volumes, *Hemingway and Posthumanism* and *Agamben and the Existentialists*, all published within the last four years by the highly reputable Edinburgh University Press. In addition, he's published numerous peer-reviewed articles, delivered papers at national and international conferences, and placed several book reviews—all while serving as a peer reviewer for six different journals and as an Advisory Board Member for *Transformations in Higher Education*. This research portfolio is nothing short of astonishing and merits our collective applause, even if it is not directly captured by the criteria for promotion to Senior Instructor I. Norris's scholarly engagements inform his teaching, without question, and help raise the profile of our School and University. I am in awe of what he has accomplished thus far and genuinely excited about the research projects he has in the queue.

In sum, Dr. Marcos Norris is a vital part of the School of Writing, Literature, and Film, and we consider ourselves lucky to be his colleague. He has more than met the criteria for promotion and I am eager to see his leadership within the School deepen in the years ahead.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. Jensen".

Tim Jensen, Ph.D.
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Associate Professor | Rhetoric & Composition
College of Liberal Arts