

Marissa McLargin
Saint Leo University
College of Arts and Sciences
33701 FL-52
Saint Leo, FL 33574

October 1, 2019

Dear Tenure Committee Members:

Throughout my years of teaching, I have written several recommendation letters for students but very few for colleagues. Some might say that I'm exacting and have too-high expectations, but I like to think that high standards mean my opinions can be trusted. I write this letter in wholehearted support of Chris Friend, as he applies for tenure at Saint Leo University.

I met Chris shortly after I arrived at Saint Leo, when I volunteered to serve on the Composition Committee he was chairing. I worked with Chris in this capacity for more than two years, and Chris continually impressed me with his work ethic and patience. There is little glory afforded to committee chairs, especially when the work involves redesigning an archaic yet entrenched program that affects every student at the University. It's long hours and thankless work, especially when some committee members are less than happy about the required redesign for a UE Foundations course.

Still, Chris rigorously researched national trends and competitors' writing programs so that he could offer insightful, intelligent ideas to position Saint Leo as a frontrunner while continuing to serve the needs of our diverse student population—on campus, at centers, and online. Chris showed up early to every meeting prepared and ready to go, voluntarily setting up video and telephone conferencing for absent members, and he kindly listened to every member who commented on the process.

This ability to listen with kindness is something so vital in today's society and a skill at which Chris Friend excels. Even though 2019 saw a newly appointed Composition Committee that fully supported Chris and his work, he still had to face the difficult obstacle of addressing departmental concerns regarding the new curriculum. I am pleased to say that Chris kindly addressed each voiced concern and deftly met faculty needs with researched solutions, all of which recently resulted in seeing both Academic Writing I and Academic Writing II pass the department with a majority vote.

Having now also served with Chris on the English Annual Program Review committee for two years, I can further attest to his constant collegiality. On several occasions, various meeting discussions grew heated, with different factions making different demands. Chris is uniquely able to diffuse contentious situations; he reminds me of the go-between often hired to work at

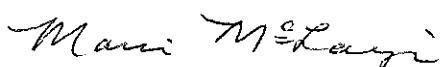
the United Nations to help competing nations find common ground. Chris patiently and intently listens to one side and then repeats what they've shared: *Okay, what I think I hear you saying is . . .*, and he then calmly articulates this communication to the "other side" in a way that makes sense and makes amends. It's truly a sight to behold. Chris works his magic and everyone leaves the meeting feeling heard and supported. What's more, the important work that needs to get done, gets done.

On a more personal note, Chris has always been kind to me outside of committee meetings—in the cafeteria, at conferences, and in the classroom. Because I respect Chris' knowledge of pedagogy especially as it relates to teaching first-year composition, I invited him to observe me teaching Academic Writing ENG 122. His comments during our post-observation reflection and on the evaluation forms helped me see my students and my teaching in a new light; based on his feedback, I reworked my peer review process, and I'm still putting into practice the skills I've learned from him.

Furthermore, Chris and I worked together to write complimentary essays for *REBUS*, the interdisciplinary campus journal published by the College of Arts and Sciences. The time we spent discussing the magazine's theme, brainstorming responses, and reading/editing/revising each other's work improved me as a thinker, writer, and editor. Since publication, I have implemented our *REBUS* articles in the classroom each year to teach ENG 121 students the compare-contrast essay or ENG 210 students about love and desire in literature. When I'm out of town for a conference, Chris is the person I ask to guest lecture in my classes. Trusting him with students in my absence is probably the highest compliment I can pay him in his role as teacher.

I could go on and on about why the Tenure Committee and Office of Academic Affairs should offer Chris Friend tenure at Saint Leo University, but I will be brief here: He is the only faculty member in our department and on our campus with a PhD focus on rhetoric and composition. For this reason alone, we need him. We also need him because he's the glue that holds our department together—he's the morale meter, a tranquil guiding light. But the main reason we need to keep Chris on campus is because he does what every teacher is *supposed* to do: He puts students first. Faced with a decision that will either benefit faculty or benefit students, Chris will choose our students every single time. While busy publishing, serving the profession and the University, and continuing his own professional development, Chris always manages to serve students in a way that makes him a leader among teachers and someone Saint Leo should offer tenure with confidence.

Sincerely,



Marissa McLargin
Department of Language Studies & the Arts
Instructor, English and Professional Writing