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Dear Tenure and Promotion Committee:

I'm writing in support of Dr. Christopher R. Friend. Before going further, let me skip to the thesis and write that I recommend Dr. Friend for tenure without reservation.

I am currently a faculty member in Digital Studies and Digital Learning Fellow at University of Mary Washington. I was previously a faculty member at University of Wisconsin-Madison. I am also co-founder of *Hybrid Pedagogy*: an open-access journal of learning, teaching, and technology and Digital Pedagogy Lab. I have known Chris since 2012 and have worked closely with him in several capacities. I met him when he was a student in one of my online faculty development courses. I was a member of his dissertation committee. I have taught and co-authored with him several times, and he is currently the Director of *Hybrid Pedagogy*.

I have had the pleasure to read significantly from Chris's writing about his own teaching and scholarship. From the first days of collaborating with Chris, I noticed that he has a keen ability to reflect meta-cognitively on his own work. In a draft of his tenure materials, he writes: "One of my greatest strengths is making people—students, conference attendees, workshop participants—feel welcome and respected, even while challenging them to re-evaluate their assumptions about writing or teaching." This is incredibly apt. In his teaching, scholarship, and administrative work, Chris inspires the trust necessary for collaboration (disciplinary, pedagogical, and otherwise), and he pushes his collaborators (his students, fellow teachers) to also do the hard work of critical reflection.

Chris is a consummate teacher. The work of teaching is deeply deeply in his bones. In 2016, I had the pleasure of teaching with Chris for a week at the Digital Humanities Summer Institute in Victoria, Canada. I observed Chris as he lectured, as he led discussion, as he conducted a roomful of small groups of teacher-students busily working on projects. He did each of these things with a very special kind of intentionality and focus. Chris listens carefully to every single person in a room and appears to guide the work of students effortlessly. But he is never merely in the background, because he brings his full self to the work of teaching—championing, asking

hard questions, taking risks, modeling, sharing his expertise when that is what the room needs, and always bringing a refreshing honesty. His classroom hums with a very specific kind of energy. I've done classroom observations since 2003, and I almost always find that I learn more by watching the students than by watching the teacher. What I noticed about Chris's students is that they are kind to one another, and also patient, challenging, and brave. His pedagogy knits a community.

All of these things make him particularly good at teaching writing—a subject which asks students to take risks, to explore terrain they have not yet explored, to investigate materials (and skills) they have sometimes naturalized or taken for granted. His pedagogy gives students the space they need (and also the encouragement they need) to leave no stone unturned as they consider how we speak, how we write, how we use tools to communicate, and the webs we build for reaching each other online. He is also excellent at offering feedback, taking seriously the work of students, pushing them in just the right ways and at just the right moments. As a hybrid and online teacher, Chris harnesses the stuff of the Internet to a slightly different effect than he does the classroom. This is because he understands explicitly that teaching in a classroom and teaching on the Web require different inputs to receive similar outputs. When working online, what Chris does so extraordinarily is model. He experiments alongside students, challenging himself to work in unfamiliar ways to embolden everyone else around him. He builds courses with an eye toward accessibility, crafting a myriad of points of entry that draw a diverse set of students into the work of writing and rhetoric.

Chris's scholarship and pedagogy feed one another. He is interested in how the teaching of writing works across media, from classrooms to digitally-mediated environments to fully online courses. For him, thinking about writing means more than thinking about just the text on the page. But also how the shape of the page (whether analog or digital) changes what ends up written upon it and how it is received. He is interested in how writing sits alongside other more interactive media. And, most recently, he is interested in sound—how words transmit through sound in distinct ways. His podcast, *HybridPod*, is an amazing example of this. Over the last three years, Chris has held conversations with some of the most well-known teachers and scholars of writing and digital studies. From the audio recordings of these conversations, he finds the threads of a narrative argument, and stitches together short curated podcast episodes. He is not content to let the conversation just sit upon the ear, but shapes it and crafts it like a documentarian.

Chris brings his pedagogy and scholarship to bear directly on his work for *Hybrid Pedagogy*: an open-access journal of learning, teaching, and technology. As Director of the journal, he leads a team of 11 editors, who work collaboratively with authors throughout the peer review process. He has helped guide the invention of the editorial process almost from its inception, helping it

remain attentive to the digital and pedagogical environments in which the journal lives. I am confident that this experience has made him a better collaborator, both digitally and in person. His work with the journal draws together his scholarly research, service, and teaching — helping other scholars think through the intersections between these aspects of academic work. And this work bridges his work in physical and digital spaces as well, because his work as a director of a scholarly journal directly informs the face-to-face faculty development work he does around the world. In short, through his work, and how he approaches all of his work, Chris knits community within and across his disciplines in much the same way that he does through his teaching.

For all the reasons I mentioned, I would absolutely recommend Dr. Friend for tenure at Saint Leo University. If you have questions, or if there is any way I can help in your decision-making process, please contact me at [jstommel@umw.edu](mailto:jstommel@umw.edu) or 303-408-9809.

Best,



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