

March 1-2, 2012

ITEM 154-1005-R0312

Authorization to Confer the Title of Dean Emeritus on Sharon E. Alexander; The University of Montana–Missoula

THAT

Given the retirement of Dean Sharon Alexander from The University of Montana, the School of Extended and Lifelong Learning and the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs wish to express their deep appreciation for her years of dedicated and valued service to the University, the School, the State of Montana, and the field of continuing education by recommending that the rank of Dean Emeritus of the School of Extended and Lifelong Learning be conferred upon her by the Board of Regents of the Montana University System.

EXPLANATION

Sharon Eldred Alexander received her B.A. at the University of Toronto in 1977, and her B.Ed. at the same institution in 1978. She went on to earn her M. A. at the University of Victoria in 1983 and her Ed.D. at Brigham Young University in 1985. She joined The University of Montana in 1990 as the Dean of Continuing Education, and was also an adjunct professor in the Phyllis J. Washington College of Education and Human Sciences, where she taught courses in Adult and Continuing Education.

Sharon Alexander served as Dean for more than twenty years, from October of 1990 through January of 2011. During this time she was responsible for the development, management and administration of all extended learning programs, including those both on- and off-campus. She worked effectively with multiple constituencies including committees and groups within the University; with business and government leaders; and with other state and national educational institutions and professional organizations. Sharon served as an integral member of the Academic Officers group, helping to guide the direction of Academic Affairs at UM. Dean Alexander's professional commitment was based on the philosophy that the role of continuing education within a university is to work collaboratively with academic deans and faculty members to facilitate program development reflecting the mission of the institution. Her service to The University of Montana included numerous activities that focused on program development, service on campus committees and with international programs, fundraising, external activities, and her own continuing education and research interests.

A few of the program contributions Dean Alexander made during her tenure included developing the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute of The University of Montana. The Osher program, affectionately known as MOLL, started as a modest grassroots program and has grown into a significant way for the University to reach out to a different age group of students, provide them with high-quality, intellectually based access to education, and has proven to be an important link between UM and the greater Missoula community. Another program highlight for Dean Alexander was her contribution to the early development of the Bitterroot College Program. Through collaboration with individuals in the greater Hamilton area, planning evolved into a program acceptable to both the University and the citizens of the Bitterroot Valley, ensuring that the underserved educational needs of the area were addressed.

Additional program development included building a self-supporting Wintersession which subsequently

became a highly subscribed state-supported program. Over the years, Dean Alexander worked closely with Education, Business, Pharmacy, and Physical Therapy to develop and deliver external and online graduate programs including a number of Ed.D. Cohort programs in Great Falls, Canada, and Taiwan. In addition, she co-hosted two National Conferences on Undergraduate Research in in 2000 and 2010.

The planning, financial support, construction and maintenance of the bonded James E. Todd building was another of Dean Alexander's major contributions to the UM campus and the campus community. In 2010, Dean Alexander successfully petitioned UM administration and Faculty Senate and the Board of Regents to change the unit's name from Continuing Education and Summer Programs to the School for Extended and Lifelong Learning. The latter more accurately reflects the unit's diversity, complexity and overall contributions to UM.

During her twenty-plus years at UM, Dean Alexander served on a number of campus committees and task forces. Too numerous to mention here, their primary foci were on information technology; strategic planning; gerontological education; development; and program-related advisory groups. Her activities with the International Programs office included consulting stints in Belize and Guyana as part of USAID grants, as well as working with teams from UM to initiate institutional agreements with Charles University in the Czech Republic and the University of Pecs in Hungary. Perhaps her most notable international work was with a Taiwanese doctoral program, in which she traveled to Taiwan to work directly with students in the program; provided infrastructure for its ongoing support; and served on the dissertation committees of many of the students. In addition, Dean Alexander supervised MAS masters students and served on numerous doctoral thesis committees at both UM and MSU. Dean Alexander was also very engaged with state and national organizations related to continuing education. To highlight only a few, she served three terms on the Commission on Continuing Legal Education, a Commission of the Montana Supreme Court and for three terms on the Continuing Legal Education Board of the State Bar of Montana. She provided leadership to the University Continuing Education Association [UCEA] in a variety of capacities as well as to North American Association of Summer Sessions [NAASS]. For the latter, she was twice elected Treasurer and Chair of Finance Committee; twice elected Western Region Vice President; Chair of the Publications Committee; and served on the Editorial Board of Summer Academe.

Dean Alexander's personal continuing education included attendance at the Harvard School of Education's Management of Lifelong Education [MLE] Institute as well as the UCEA Executive Leadership Academy. Her research and presentations interests included program evaluation; distance education; adult learning and older adult learning.

The Provost and the Office for Academic Affairs and the School of Extended and Lifelong Learning are honored to recommend Dean Sharon Alexander for Emeritus status. With this recommendation go sincere thanks for 20 years of invaluable service to the State of Montana and The University of Montana. She has been a wonderful University citizen and has worked to enhance the substance and the reputation of the University. MOLLI and SELL prospered under her exemplary leadership, and will continue to do so, thanks to her vision.

ATTACHMENTS