




DATE: August 22, 2014

TO: Clayton Christian, Commissioner of Higher Education
Members of the Montana Board of Regents

FROM: Royce C. Engstrom, President 

RE: Nomination of Ragan Callaway for Regents Professor

I am writing to seek your approval for the appointment of Professor Ragan (Ray) Callaway as the next Regents Professor at the University of Montana. Before going into detail about Professor Callaway, I will say that while I have known Ray for seven years and have had tremendous respect for him, I truly did not know that we had one of the world's top professors of biology in our midst. As you browse the packet of information accompanying this nomination, you will see letters of support from people who themselves are stellar scientists from around the country and beyond. I was pleasantly surprised to see the extraordinary contributions and reputation held by our own Professor Callaway.

First and foremost, as should be the case for a Regents Professor nominee, Ray Callaway is an exemplar for a faculty member at the University of Montana. With exceptional work in all three areas of responsibility – teaching, research, and service – Professor Callaway has become a model of productivity and impact. Rare are those faculty members who establish internationally renowned research programs and at the same time care deeply about students at all levels, and further, contribute to the well-being of their institution and profession through service. Ray is such a person.

Several weeks ago, the Thompson Reuters News Agency conducted a study by asking the question, “Who are some of the best and brightest scientific minds of our time?” The conducted an analysis of the impact of scientific work by looking at numbers of publications and, more importantly, the number of times those publications were cited in the work of others and the “impact factor” of the work. They identified the top 1% of scientists around the world. Ray, along with two other UM professors, were the only Montanans included on the list.

Through over 200 published articles(!), a large number of which have appeared in the nation's most prestigious journals (*Science* and *Nature* are the gold standard of publication, as is the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*), Ray has been formative in his concepts and experimental work surrounding interaction of plant species. He is the leading proponent of a concept called “positive interactions” among plants, where certain plants influence the growth and vigor of others. This concept is relevant, for example, to the understanding of invasive

Office of the President

species, a topic of importance to Montana. His work has earned him a position as a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, a rare recognition.

Ray is also a truly inspirational teacher. He teaches at all levels, from freshman biology for non-majors (UM100) to the highest level of graduate education. His teaching reviews are consistently among the best in the Division of Biological Sciences and he excels in the classroom. Effective teaching extends beyond the classroom, and Ray is noted for his mentorship of students as well. He has worked with students of all levels in the research setting, and just last year was the recipient of our new Davidson Honors College Paul Lauren Undergraduate Mentor Award. Ray has served as the advisor on the committees of graduate students, directly supervising an average of five students per year and serving on the committees of an average of 13 per year. Having been a graduate mentor myself, I understand the commitment Ray makes and his advising load is tremendous.

Ray is a citizen of the University and of his profession. His current most visible contribution to service is in his appointment as the Project Director for the Montana EPSCoR Program, assuming that role in 2013. He is doing an excellent job and was instrumental in restoring the confidence of the National Science Foundation in the Montana project. He has been a stalwart in the University's effort to promote international interaction and global thinking. The list of countries in which Ray has worked or has collaborations is long and distributed around the world. As one of his nominators points out, Ray has hosted 28 different international collaborators in just the last six years! During my first year as Provost, I attended a meeting in Hungary and met a young scientist who indicated he wanted to spend time at our university. Who ended up striking up a conversation with him? Ray Calloway did, and the young scientist is now in his third visit to UM, in collaboration with Ray, this time staying for nearly two years. Reinforcing Ray's interest in serving at all levels; he also has been the faculty advisor to a number of student clubs on campus.

Finally, Ray has personal characteristics that endear him to his friends and colleagues. He is always optimistic, professional, and humble. I have enjoyed getting to know Ray and I admire the breadth of his activity as well as the intensive depth of expertise he has developed during his years at UM. He is one of the faculty members that give the University its grand reputation. I could not be more proud than to recommend Ray Calloway to you for the rank of Regents Professor.

Thank you for your consideration.

RCE/tp
Engmem271