

May 20, 2020

ITEM 188-1503-R0520

Request for Authorization to Confer the Title of Professor Emeritus of Liberal Studies on Dr. Roberta Ray - Montana Technological University

THAT

Upon the occasion of the retirement of Professor Roberta K. Ray from the faculty of Montana Tech, the faculty wishes to express its appreciation for her 45 years of dedication and valued service by requesting the rank of Professor Emeritus be conferred upon her by the Board of Regents of Higher Education.

EXPLANATION

Roberta graduated magna cum laude with a B.A. in Speech Communication and minor in Latin from California State University Long Beach, earning membership in Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society. She was also active in Phi Beta Fraternity, a professional fraternity for music, speech, and drama majors.

As a National Defense Fellow, Roberta earned an M.A. and Ph.D. in Speech Communication with a minor in Classical Literature from the University of Southern California. Her young major professor and Korean War veteran, Walter Fisher, would later earn the distinction of being recognized by his peers as the top scholar in his field. Roberta wrote a dissertation on *The Role of the Orator in the Philosophy of Ralph Waldo Emerson* and would later publish an article based on the dissertation in *Speech Monographs*, the most prestigious journal in the field at that time. (Volume 41, Number 3).

Roberta started her teaching career in the Speech Department at the University of Southwestern Louisiana in Lafayette where her Group Discussion class organized the first Earth Day Celebration at the University. Her students actively investigated corporate pollution in the community and succeeded in getting one local industry to undertake significant changes in their industrial process to prevent water pollution. Her argumentation and debate students also won top honors. Roberta was fortunate to have three colleagues at USL who were exceptional speech teachers, and Roberta still uses ideas they shared with her.

After two years of teaching in Lafayette, Roberta moved to Madison, Wisconsin and worked in public relations for the next five years while teaching part-time at the University of Wisconsin. In addition to taking graduate classes in Education and Political Science, Roberta volunteered weekends working with young incarcerated women.

While in Wisconsin, Roberta published several articles including: "The Place of the orator in Jean Bodin's Commonwealth," *The Southern Speech Communication Journal* (Fall, 1972), 61-79 (co-author, John Ray) and "Developing Self-Understanding and Tolerance through the Study of Comparative Cultures," *Wisconsin Journal of Public Instruction* (Winter, 1974, 259-264.)

Roberta started her teaching career at Montana Tech in the fall of 1975 and developed many classes over the next decades, including public speaking, interpersonal communication, group dynamics, business and profession communication, public relations, argumentation, career life planning, and parliamentary law. She also taught college success classes for one year, and taught Latin for high school and junior high students one summer.

During the early years of their teaching at Tech, Roberta and John Ray served as advisers and coaches for the speech and debate team and traveled with the students to competitions as far as Wisconsin and

Canada. Roberta was proud that the team included students from most majors and non-traditional as well as traditional students. These students brought home many awards and trophies for speech and debate competition.

When students asked Roberta about starting a drama club, she asked for help from local theatre folks and started a Montana Tech Drama Club. The first production was Euripides, *The Trojan Woman*. Roberta adapted the tragedy for a modern audience. The club had two well-attended productions a year for the next six years. For the dress rehearsal of every production, the patients at all Butte nursing homes were invited, so the students had a full house of people who thoroughly enjoyed their efforts.

Early in her career at Tech, Roberta was privileged to serve on the committee that designed and built the library and auditorium. This was the same auditorium where her students would hold drama productions.

Roberta played a key role in developing the very successful Society and Technology degree and the option in Communications. When teaching public relations classes, Roberta had her students work on actual projects in the community such as promoting blood drives and increasing new donors for Butte Blood Services. Her students also started the first volunteer fair at Montana Tech. Many of her S & T graduates established successful careers in public relations and other communication fields.

Roberta has given more than 100 presentations to community groups throughout her career including presentations on communication to the Montana Dental Association, the New Mexico Dieticians Association in Santa Fe, the National Association of Parliamentarians in Detroit, and the EPA Community Involvement Conferences in Boston and Seattle. She has conducted about 75 communication training programs for local governments, state and federal agencies, hospitals, and corporations. For many years she was a trainer for the Right of Way Association and conducted communication courses throughout the U.S. and in Canada.

Roberta has presented numerous papers through the years at the National Communication Association, Southern Communication Association, and the International Listening Association. In 2017 she presented a paper on Transcendentalism at Queen Mary College in London for the International Society for the History of Rhetoric.

Roberta took many workshops and training programs through the years to update her teaching skills and knowledge of her discipline. She always found it helpful to learn what other teachers were doing with their classes at various colleges around the country. She felt it was important to understand and use the assessment instrument for public speaking developed by the National Communication Association and to take workshops in public relations sponsored by the Public Relations Society of America to keep abreast of latest trends. She earned membership in the Public Relations Society of America and passed the exams to become a Parliamentarian with the National Association of Parliamentarians in the early 1990's.

Roberta wrote her own textbook, *The Power of Listening*, for use in her public speaking classes. The book includes an instrument that Roberta developed so that students can understand their own styles of listening and how to adapt their speeches to different types of listeners.

One of the accomplishments for which Roberta is most proud is using her public relations skills to defeat the Stansbury Mining Company's plans to develop a vermiculite processing plant in Butte in the 1980's. This mafia-owned company may well have turned Butte into another Libby since the plant would have released asbestos into the air and would have been located near an elementary school. Over a five-year period,

Roberta partnered with Dr. Katherine Wilkerson, M.D., Dr. John Ray in Butte, and a group of scientists and concerned citizens in Hamilton who were working to stop the development of a vermiculite mine there. In the late 1990's Roberta was appointed to a statewide committee sponsored by the Pew Foundation for the purpose of developing educational goals for each public institution of higher education in every state. Chancellor Linsey Norman asked Roberta to head up Montana Tech's program. Using group dynamics techniques for consensus building, she involved faculty and administrators in developing campus-wide goals and preparing a printed report. After one year of meetings between all campus representatives, the representative of the Pew Foundation assigned to work with Montana colleges praised Montana Tech and Chancellor Norman for having the best report of all Montana colleges and one of the best of any public college in the U.S.

From October 2008 until April 2009 Roberta was one of many local folks, including three other Montana Tech teachers and several students, who volunteered at the Camp Husky Rescue when a school bus and trailer containing more than 100 dogs, more than half pregnant females, were stranded in Butte. One of the first volunteers who started the rescue was a Tech alumna. This was a volunteer operation of major proportions. Volunteers did all the work (7 days a week) of caring for the dogs, socializing them, obtaining buildings to house them, obtaining equipment, and raising money to cover the costs. Working 16 hours every weekend and all holidays, Roberta had the opportunity to observe volunteers from all walks of life from individuals struggling with addiction problems and homelessness to affluent professionals. She marveled at the fact that these differences disappeared in that setting where all the volunteers shared the one goal of saving the dogs. In 2010 Roberta started interviewing all the people she could find who had volunteered at Camp Husky from teens to 80 year olds. Next, she was able to locate and interview 100 individuals or families that adopted one or more dogs from all over Montana and as far away as Michigan and North Carolina. After four years of searching for people and conducting interviews she wrote the book, *Angels on a School Bus, How a Community of Volunteers Saved 200 German Shepherds and Huskies*. All revenues from the book have been donated to organizations that helped the Camp Husky dogs and to dog rescues around the country. The paperback has sold over 4,000 copies and more than 32,000 people have read the book on Kindle.

Roberta published a feature article in the *Montana Standard* (Dec. 16, 2017) that told the story of a 19 year old student at Montana State with a life threatening illness and how the Camp Husky puppy she adopted gave her the will to survive. Roberta was honored when two other newspapers picked up the story, *The Missoulian* and the *Billings Gazette*. Roberta has since sold three magazine articles based on the book. The latest will appear this spring in *Simply Pets*, a publication based in Seattle. The story features a Camp Husky dog adopted by the owner of a perfume store in South Lake Tahoe. This young woman is a brittle diabetic and the dog she adopted has been trained to alert his owner before her blood sugar is out of control. This shop owner frequently has visitors to the store who have read the book and want to meet her remarkable dog. College students from San Francisco were assigned *Angels* as a text in their animal rights class. A couple from New Zealand read the book and decided to visit Lake Tahoe and meet the dog. Roberta has received e-mails from folks all over the U.S. and Europe who have been inspired to volunteer and donate to animal rescues after reading about the remarkable people of Butte and the dogs they saved.

Recently, Roberta has been honored to be part of the naturalization ceremonies for new citizens in Montana.

Roberta appreciates the opportunity that Montana Tech provided to know so many gifted teachers and dedicated researchers, to learn from so many wonderful students and enjoy watching them develop their talents, and finally to be part of the remarkable community of Butte Silver Bow.

ATTACHMENTS

None