

September 21-22, 2022

**ITEM 202-1004-0922**

**Request for Authorization to Confer the Title of Professor Emeritus of Neuroscience on Regents Professor Richard Bridges; University of Montana-Missoula**

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**THAT**

Upon the occasion of the retirement of Regents Professor Richard Bridges from the faculty of The University of Montana, the faculty wishes to express its appreciation for his 29 years of dedicated, effective and valued service to the University and the State of Montana by recommending that the rank of Professor Emeritus be conferred upon him by the Board of Regents of the Montana University System.

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**EXPLANATION**

Dr. Richard Bridges earned his Ph.D. in Biochemistry in 1984 from Cornell University. Following postdoctoral research in neuroscience, he joined the Department of Neurology at the University of California, Irvine, as an Assistant Professor in 1987. Dr. Bridges advanced to the rank of Associate Professor at UC-Irvine in 1993 simultaneous with his recruitment to the University of Montana as Associate Professor of Pharmacy in 1993. At the University of Montana, he advanced to the rank of Professor in 1998. From 2000-2008, he served as the founder and Director of the NIH COBRE Center for Structural and Functional Neuroscience in the Department of Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences. From 2008-2015, he served as Chair of the Department of Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences in the Skaggs School of Pharmacy at the University of Montana, during which he was appointed Regents Professor in 2011. In 2017, he resumed directorship of the NIH COBRE Center for Structural and Functional Neuroscience (CSFN) and in 2019, became Director of the Neuroscience Program at the University of Montana, in which he oversees the research center (CSFN) as well as the graduate and undergraduate neuroscience degree programs at UM. Finally, in 2020 he moved the locus of his position and the neuroscience programs to the Division of Biological Sciences within the College of Humanities and Sciences (CHS) to galvanize a broader base of neuroscience-related faculty participation in research and teaching. Dr. Bridges retired from the University of Montana in May 2022.

Professor Bridges' contributions to the field of neuroscience have been significant and extensive, particularly as related to the neurotransmitter glutamate, its transporters and neuronal metabolism. His work has illuminated mechanisms of excitatory neurotoxicity, central nervous system oxidative injury and protection, and glial tumors. The impact of his scholarly contributions is reflected on his curriculum vitae which lists 80 published articles, including papers in renowned journals such as Journal of Neuroscience, Journal of Biological Chemistry, Molecular Pharmacology, Glia, and Neuropharmacology. He is also an author on 8 patents on novel drug compounds. His scholarly productivity is equally matched by a consistent track record of strong grant funding representing many millions of research dollars from the National Institutes of Health and other funding agencies.

Throughout his career at UM, Regents Professor Bridges has remained committed to and invested in teaching at several levels. He has taught pharmacology and neuropharmacology to Doctor of Pharmacy students, served as major professor to 15 graduate students (M.S. and Ph.D.), and taught both graduate and undergraduate courses in the area of neuroscience. He initiated the mainstay undergraduate/graduate course Central Nervous System Diseases and has offered courses for non-STEM students on similar topics. Despite his many intensive leadership roles at UM (see below), he has remained a consistent contributor to our curriculum, an inspirational teacher to UM's students, and has set an example for other UM faculty that no matter how involved in research and service roles one becomes, teaching must always remain a

top priority at UM. Dr. Bridges was awarded the Instructor of the Year Award in Pharmacy (1997) and served as the Provost's Distinguished Faculty Lecturer (2004).

Regents Professor Bridges' service to the University of Montana has been truly exceptional. He has played a major role in the transformation of UM into a modern research institution. He was the founding member of the Center for Structural and Functional Neuroscience, which through major NIH funding brought essential research infrastructure, new faculty hires, and research administrative support to UM. As Chair of the Department of Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences, he oversaw an extremely research-active group of tenure-track faculty and helped guide UM's growing emphasis in biomedical research and teaching. For these and other contributions he was recognized with the Dennison Presidential Faculty Award twice (2008 and 2022), and was named Regents Professor (2011). Recently, Dr. Bridges played a major role in promoting and improving the undergraduate neuroscience program at UM. As director of UM's integrated Neuroscience Program (2019-2022), he has been instrumental in advancing new student recruitment and marketing for the program, making interdisciplinary neuroscience a major growth area for UM undergraduates and graduate students.

In sum, we recommend that Regents Professor Richard Bridges be awarded an Emeritus appointment with the highest enthusiasm. He has made a lasting impact on the University of Montana as a program director, scholar and teacher. It is also readily apparent that Professor Bridges will continue to contribute to and be a champion of this University and that he should do so as an Emeritus Professor of Neuroscience.

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**ATTACHMENTS**

None