

May 20, 2026

ITEM 224-1014-R0526

Request for Authorization to Confer the Title of Professor Emeritus in the College of Humanities and Social Science on Dr. Ashby Kinch; University of Montana-Missoula

THAT

Upon the occasion of the retirement of Dr. Ashby Kinch from the faculty of The University of Montana, the faculty wishes to express its appreciation for his 21 years of dedicated 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.

EXPLANATION

Dr. Kinch earned his Ph.D. at the University of Michigan and joined the English Department at the University of Montana in 2003 as an Associate Professor and in 2013 rose to the rank of Professor. His administrative and leadership experience at The University of Montana was extensive, culminating in his appointment as dean of the Graduate School from 2021 until 2024.

During his time at the University of Montana, Dr. Kinch was a very successful and popular teacher. He was well-known as the English Department's Medievalist and was regularly consulted by students and faculty regarding their research. He served as the Director of Graduate Studies in the Department and supervised and served on many theses after teaching a multitude of graduate-levels courses during his 21 years at the University. He taught courses that appealed to students from all the Department's graduate programs, including courses on the history of the English lyric and poetics, which drew students from literature, the MFA program and teaching. He earned strong teaching evaluations from students, and he was evaluated consistently as an outstanding teacher by his colleagues. Student advocacy was a special area of focus for Kinch. He worked actively with the Graduate and Professional Student Association at the University, formed the new Graduate Student Research Council, and helped develop the Indigenous Graduate Student Association.

Professor Kinch's research profile was wide-ranging, including numerous essays on Middle English literature, and a co-edited volume, *Chartier in Europe* (Boydell & Brewer, 2008) on the Europe-wide influence of the French poet Alain Chartier. He was involved in scholarly inquiry in the areas of conceptions of death and dying in the art and culture of the late medieval period including the monograph *Imago Mortis: Mediating Images of Death in Late Medieval Culture* (Brill, 2013) and a recent edited volume on the medieval period for the *Cultural History of Death* series (Bloomsbury, 2024). Dr. Kinch's scholarship was never confined, however, to any single period, methodology or text. He published research on neuroscience and contemporary lyric poetry as well as a host of focused, historically rigorous work on the literature and art of the late Medieval period. Dr. Kinch gave numerous public talks on these subjects and was involved in a number of grants dealing with research in these areas including the wildly successful multi-year NEH Seminar "Re-Imagining Death: Conversations About Dying, Loss & Grief," a community-wide conversation funded by a grant from the National Endowment of the Humanities, which both provided a venue for scholarly inquiry and a forum for the public to hear and engage with questions of human mortality.

Professor Kinch played an important service role on campus in addition to his contributions in the areas of teaching and research. In 2021, the University of Montana and Ashby were recognized at the national level by the Council of Graduate Schools, winning the Award for Innovation in Promoting Success in

Graduate Education. As Dean of Graduate Studies, he was heavily involved in the pursuit of R1 status for the University of Montana, including developing new tracks for completing degrees in the Interdisciplinary Graduate program, as well as funding fellowships for dissertation completion. He also was institutional PI for an NSF “Innovations in Graduate Education” grant from 2021-2024, which developed programming to support the mental health and well-being of STEM graduate students.

The College of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Montana is pleased to nominate Professor Ashby Kinch for Emeritus Status.

ATTACHMENTS

No attachments