November 2026

ITEM 227-1002-R1126

Request for Authorization to Confer the Title of Professor Emeritus in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences on Dr. Tobin Miller Shearer, The University of Montana

THAT

Upon the occasion of the retirement of Dr. Tobin Miller Shearer from the faculty of the University of Montana, the faculty of the Department of History wishes to express its deep appreciation for his 18 years of truly extraordinary teaching, service, scholarship, program building, and mentoring by recommending that the rank of Professor Emeritus be conferred upon him by the Board of Regents of the Montana University System. As Department Chairperson, I concur. This document, prepared and submitted by me with department consensus, constitutes formal nomination and application for Professor Emeritus status conferral for Dr. Tobin Miller Shearer in accordance with UM Policy 300 and BOR Policy 702.2.

EXPLANATION

Professor Shearer earned his Ph.D. in History and Religion from Northwestern University in 2008 and started at the University of Montana that same year as an Assistant Professor in the History Department and Director of the African American Studies Program. Professor Shearer's subsequent record at the University of Montana more than merits the award of Professor Emeritus. He has maintained a distinguished and sustained record of excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service, while also making an extraordinary contribution to the intellectual and civic life of the university, the state, and the broader public.

In teaching, Professor Shearer has been recognized repeatedly for excellence at both the university and state levels. His many honors include the Montana University System Board of Regents' MUS Teaching Scholar Award, the University of Montana Distinguished Teaching Award, the Nancy Borgmann Diversity Award, the Helen and Winston Cox Educational Excellence Award, and the Paul Lauren Undergraduate Research Faculty Mentor Award. He was also recognized publicly as Best University of Montana Professor by the *Missoula Independent*. These awards reflect not only his effectiveness in the classroom, but also his deep commitment to mentorship, inclusive pedagogy, and student success.

Professor Shearer's scholarly record is equally impressive. During his years at UM, he produced five books, including a current monograph under contract, along with six book chapters, seventeen academic articles, nineteen book reviews, and forty-two popular press essays and articles. This body of work reflects both sustained scholarly productivity and a rare ability to engage multiple audiences, from academic specialists to general readers. His scholarly reputation is further evidenced by thirty invited lectures and fourteen academic conference presentations. In addition, he served as principal investigator on a $500,000 National Endowment for the Humanities American Rescue Plan grant, a significant achievement that speaks to both the quality of his work and his leadership in securing external support.

Professor Shearer's service record has been exceptional and wide-ranging. At the university level, he invigorated a moribund African American Studies Program through vigorous and visionary leadership. Among many accomplishments as Director of the African American Studies Program, he added both a major and a certificate in the African-American Studies, thereby creating an enduring curricular legacy at UM. He founded and served as first director of the Pedagogy Project, which has provided teaching mentorship for scores of UM faculty. He also served as a long-time executive committee member of the Women and Gender Studies Program. Beyond campus, his service has been equally substantial: he served

for seven years on the Humanities Montana Board of Directors, including the last three years as chair, and for eight years on the UFA board, including terms as treasurer and president. These roles reflect a sustained commitment not only to shared governance and institutional leadership, but also to the humanities and public life in Montana more broadly.

Professor Shearer has also exemplified the highest ideals of public engagement. Over his years at UM, he delivered more than 130 public talks and workshops. During the period of national reckoning following the murder of George Floyd, he provided especially notable leadership through public speaking, consultations, and educational outreach. In that period alone, his presentations and online tutorials reached 49,501 participants, including 11,637 audience members in live presentations. He gave 117 live presentations and consults, reached audiences in eighteen states and fifteen countries, and spoke to an audience of 7,000 people. Few faculty members so fully embody the university's public mission.

Taken together, Professor Shearer's record clearly satisfies and indeed far exceeds the standards for emeritus status. He has compiled an outstanding record of excellence in teaching, research and scholarship, and service, while also leaving a profound institutional and public legacy. For these reasons, the History Department faculty strongly and unanimously support awarding Tobin Miller Shearer the rank of Professor Emeritus.

ATTACHMENTS

None