

April 10, 2012

U.S. Professors of the Year Selection Committee
CASE
1307 New York Avenue, NW, Suite 1000
Washington, DC 20005-4701

Re: John Boyer Nomination for CASE Professor of the Year

Dear Selection Committee:

I wish to express my strong support for Mr. John Boyer's nomination for the U.S. Professors of the Year Award in the Research University Professor category.

John Boyer is a unique and highly gifted educator. He has created several courses that attract and engage large numbers of undergraduates in the learning process. His course entitled "World Regions" offered through the Department of Geography has grown in size and scope to become the largest single class at Virginia Tech. Through the cutting-edge use of new technologies, a charismatic personal style, and a phenomenal and somewhat irreverent knowledge of world culture, politics, and geography, Mr. Boyer is able to challenge students to explore issues of great importance. In most cases, the students start out with very limited or naïve perspectives about various countries, their cultures, and subcultures.

By adopting the fictitious "Plaid Avenger" role, John is able to stimulate student learning throughout the semester. Students in many different majors and across the full range of academic abilities consistently cite the course as a transformational experience that ultimately altered their world views and knowledge base. Rarely have I heard about a survey course that appeals so strongly to the very brightest and motivated students at the university.

John actively involves students by letting them invite special guests who can add a special dimension to the class. Last fall, the students were able to attract Martin Sheen and Emilio Estevez to campus to talk about and preview his newest film about a pilgrimage in Spain. They also attracted Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel Peace prize activist from Burma, to speak with the class via Skype. John works closely with our teaching support personnel to develop new pedagogical strategies on an ongoing basis.

In summary, John is an unorthodox nominee for such an award, but he clearly demonstrates how one person can have a positive impact on a very large number of students in a major research university.

Sincerely,



Mark G. McNamee
Senior Vice President and Provost

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