

To: The Honors and Awards Committee of the EUEC
From: Gretchen Schulz and Marilynne McKay
Re: Nominee for the EUEC Faculty Award of Distinction
Date: January 24, 2020

Name of nominee: Holly Ulmer York

Senior Lecturer Emerita, Department of French and Italian

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Name of nominator 1: Gretchen Schulz

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Name of nominator 2; Marilynne McKay

Emerita Professor of Dermatology

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We write to nominate Holly York, Senior Lecturer Emerita of French, for one of the EUEC Faculty Awards of Distinction. Since she retired from the Department of French and Italian (at the end of the 2012-2013 academic year) and joined the EUEC, we have come to know her well enough to know what so many of her other Emory colleagues have long known, that this is a woman whose "professional contributions" have been well worth recognition ever since she began to serve in that Department in 1992 and whose "professional contributions" are worth recognition still (and maybe even moreso), in her decidedly UNretiring "retirement."

Certainly, the Emeritus College has benefitted from her enthusiastic participation (and frequent leadership) in much of its major programming, not least the work she put into organizing the all-important opening reception and banquet for the conference of October 2018 in which Emory and the EUEC hosted the biannual gathering of the Association of Retirement Organizations in Higher Education. Of course, she was tasked with that considerable responsibility because she had already proven herself invaluable to us (and those we serve) in so many other ways. She had, for example, already agreed first to serve

on and then to co-chair the Mind Matters Committee, the committee that handles a range of activities at the very core of the EUEC mission “to advance the intellectual and creative interests of its members,” activities such as the Luncheon Colloquiums, the Interdisciplinary Seminars, the Celebrations of Creativity, and the Sheth Lectures. And we should note that Holly has not only helped to organize these activities, but has also presented at the Lunch Colloquiums, several times, participated in the Interdisciplinary Seminars, and herded the cats that needed to be herded to enable our Celebrations of Creativity. She has furthermore volunteered to be one of our Pre-Retirement Mentors and one of our Conversation Partners for international students in the Law School. It’s no wonder that Holly has been a mainstay of our Executive Committee for many years now, is it? And it’s no wonder that we had her represent us (and all Emory’s retirees) on the University Senate and Faculty Council for many years, as well.

So much for evidence of “professional contributions” Holly has made to Emory (and beyond) in the years since her retirement, as “significant” to the ongoing intellectual life of the university (and colleagues elsewhere) as those “contributions” she made before retirement, outlined in the c.v. that we are attaching to this letter. BUT NOW FOR SOMETHNG COMPLETELY DIFFERENT—by way of what we consider to be an even better set of reasons why Holly should be granted a Faculty Award of Distinction—reasons that might not be considered “professional” in the ways usually adduced in these letters of nomination and adduced in this letter thus far.

In the years since her retirement, Holly has ventured well beyond the boundaries of her familiar role as teacher/scholar (serving the university and the profession) and embraced a role quite new to her, at this time in her life, at least, that of student/poet. She was well aware of the opportunities offered teacher/scholars and students both by MOOCs, Massive Open Online Courses, before she retired since she had long been involved in university efforts to use tech in our classrooms and more generally keep up with modern times, and in her first year of retirement, as a participant in an Emory College Academic Learning Community on the future of higher education, she learned of Kathy Davidson’s MOOC (out of Duke) on that same subject. She joined it, and . . . the rest is *her*story. She went nuts, enrolling in MOOC after MOOC, and reveling in being a student again. She did a French course from the Sorbonne on Philosophy and Politics in France, 1945 to 1968. She did one on Gothic Cathedrals, one on Classical Music, one on Love and Marriage in the Movies, and one on Shakespeare in Community.

And then, as she puts it herself, “things got serious.” Since she’d always been interested in doing some writing herself, she signed on for a course in “How Writers Write Poetry” offered by the University of Iowa’s International Writers Program. And she began to combine courses on writing poetry with courses on poets, some from earlier times, like Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson, some from our own time., including a couple of more provided by Iowa, a couple from Harvard (via their EdX program), and one from the California School for the Arts. (And, oh yes, one on songwriting from the Berklee School of Music in Boston!) However, the one that’s meant the most to her (and to which she herself has contributed the most, as student, re-enrolling many times, and as teacher, invited by THE teacher to serve as a “community mentor”) has been a Coursera course in Modern and

Contemporary American Poetry, taught by Professor Al Filreis of the University of Pennsylvania. This year will be the sixth year she has served as a “mentor” for the many thousands of others enrolled from around the world.

As for her own poetry, a variety of workshop experiences, often open only to those whose work has been judged worthy, have helped her the most with that. She’s done some workshops right here in Atlanta—at Callanwolde with Memye Tucker Curtis. But the one most memorable thus far has been the one run by much-lauded contemporary American poet Kim Addonizio—in the form of a two-week “retreat” in Umbria in the summer of 2018 (acceptance being as competitive as you might imagine). And this very week, Holly is attending the by-invitation-only Palm Beach Poetry Festival, and much enjoying sessions devoted to attendees’ own work, daily craft talks of more general import, and nightly readings by the likes of U.S. Poet Laureate Joy Harjo and 2019 National Book Award finalist Ilya Kaminsky.

In the view of the two of us hereby nominating Holly for a Faculty Award of Distinction, her *differently* “professional” work as student and poet is at least as worthy of recognition from the EUEC Awards Committee as her continuing work in the more familiar modes of academic professionalism described in the first part of our letter. We admire her willingness to venture far from the same old same old into the new new new. We hope you will admire it, too. Thank you.

Gretchen Schulz and Marilynne McKay