



December 4, 2019

Dear Members of the Faculty Promotion and Tenure Committee:

Dr. Ryan Safner is an Assistant Professor of Economics in the Delaplaine School of Business and this letter will serve as his Chair's letter in support of his third year review. In accordance with the Faculty Code, Dr. Safner's dossier was made available for review and comment to all fulltime AC faculty members in the department and I solicited feedback from each regarding his/her evaluation of Dr. Safner's effectiveness as a teacher, scholar, and colleague. **The members of the School of Business have voted unanimously to support Dr. Safner in his 3rd year review.**

In short, I believe new educators either get what we are trying to accomplish at Hood College, in developing educated, curious, balanced students, while also continuing to mature professionally and as educators, or they don't. Ryan has understood it since his first semester at Hood, and his dedication to students, the institution and professional development have only increased with time. I have been more worried about Dr. Safner over extending himself than receiving a positive third year review.

The materials provided by Dr. Safner are extensive and offer significant evidence to showcase his achievements in teaching, scholarship, and service. As such, I have organized the following sections not to repeat this material, but to draw attention to the department's perspective on his work in each area and to provide further examples of his efforts and successes.

Teaching

Dr. Safner is an excellent educator, who brings expertise, enthusiasm, and genuine interest for his students and their learning outcomes to his classrooms. Dr. Safner joined us from Wake Forest University, where he was a visiting professor of economics. Teaching in a smaller major, economics, at Hood College, he had to adjust to classes where the vast majority of students were not economics majors, but were often business administration majors or students from across the campus minoring in business administration. Dr. Safner could have easily elected not to adjust, which would have led to more students with poor grades and a loss of confidence, or he just as easily could have lowered his standards. Either option would have not have had a positive result for our students. Instead, Dr. Safner sought the counsel of senior professors in the department and made several adjustments. One change he made was to allow test corrections for partial credit. Students are required to not only provide the correct answers, but also to provide an explanation on how they reached the correct answers. With this methodology, students who might not have correctly understood or applied a concept initially, get another chance to gain the desired knowledge. It is a win-win for everyone, except for Dr. Safner who takes on significant extra grading. Dr. Safner made these student focused time-consuming adjustments while prepping for five new courses during his first year.

Dr. Safner did an excellent job of describing his innovative methods of teaching, and it is hard for him to conceal his enthusiasm. For someone outside his field, I just know what he is doing is working. I advise many business administration students with marketing concentrations, who might be considered the least likely to embrace the field of economics. However, I have had many of my advisees decide to minor in economics (along

with a few who decided to add economics as a second major) after taking Dr. Safner for ECON 206 (Principles of Microeconomics) or ECON 306 (Microeconomics Analysis). One of those students, graduating in May, recently met with me for her last advising meeting. When I asked her what economics class she was going to take as the final class for her minor she responded “any elective taught by Dr. Safner”. Students definitely appreciate the passion and effort he puts into his classes. Dr. Safner’s teaching evaluations started quite high, which is very rare for a new professor teaching quantitative courses, and have only gotten better with time.

In short, Dr. Safner’s dedication to teaching and his innovative ideas have been a great addition to the department. We can all continue to learn from him.

Scholarship

Dr. Safner’s research stream is not only robust, timely and growing, but is also a great fit for a liberal arts college. One of his research streams explores the economic history and political economy of innovation and creativity. This is a very interesting research area, as he has not only written papers that examine the unintended consequences of past government decisions in the field of innovation, an understanding of the past is crucial in making decisions for the future, but is also writing papers on timely topics such as public goods and crowdsourcing. A second research stream Dr. Safner is pursuing attempts to model innovation and its effects on economic growth using computational social science methods. Dr. Safner and a co-author have one paper already submitted and several under development. This research stream uses computational modeling to better understand technological development and economic growth. It is definitely an area of interest to many and ripe for exploration.

Dr. Safner has clearly progressed to developing a research agenda beyond his doctoral dissertation, which is an important step for all junior faculty members. His new interest in block chain and charitable giving is not only timely, but is an area that is just now catching the discipline’s interest. This shows he has much room to grow and will have ample opportunity for future publication.

Dr. Safner has had two papers published, has several under review or near submission, and a handful in the pipeline. He also presents annually at academic conferences. In addition, he is involved in other activities the school of business considers scholarship, such as serving as a member of the Mayor of Frederick’s Strategic Opportunities Advisory Team, which delivered a report to the mayor in 2018 on economic resiliency in Frederick. It is also appreciated that he includes students in his research. The department is impressed and more than satisfied with Dr. Safner’s research endeavors and scholarship plans for the future.

Service

Dr. Safner’s service work is deeply appreciated by the School of Business. Dr. Safner provided a nice compilation of his service work, which is quite impressive. Included on this list was his current service as the chair of the Curriculum Committee. With the current changes and uncertainties in the academic offerings of the college this is a challenging time to serve on the curriculum committee. To agree to chair the committee, even before his third year review, was quite a statement of Dr. Safner’s belief in the importance of service to the college and of his colleagues’ confidence in his abilities and leadership. However, I believe Dr. Safner, if anything, understated his contributions to the school of business and the college. Dr. Safner doesn’t just show up to Admitted Student’s Days, he offers to teach multiple mini-courses every year. He does not just show up at open houses, he actively engages perspective students and their parents. Dr. Safner does not just attend our honor induction ceremony, he does an excellent job of inducting our economics students. Dr. Safner does not just serve on department honor paper committees, but he chairs committees and takes those students to academic conferences.

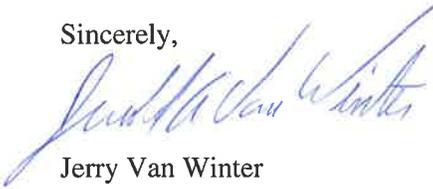
Dr. Safner’s dedication to serving the department was never more evident than this past summer. With the large incoming first year class, and key members of our department out of the country and state for a period of time, a

call went out for help with advising. Dr. Safner responded immediately, and said that besides when he was away on a planned vacation he was happy to help as needed. Dr. Safner was here for a majority of advising days over the summer. Again, he did not just show up, but he came early, helped organize the day and enthusiastically juggled multiple students during group advising. He is currently advising 31 students, and the department is confident each of those students will be in good hands.

These service efforts far outpace the expectations for a junior faculty member and shows promise of the leadership abilities required of a senior faculty member. Our department places demanding expectations on service work and Dr. Safner delivers.

As his dossier demonstrates, Dr. Safner excels in the key areas of teaching, scholarship and service work, along with being an excellent colleague. The members of the Delaplaine School of Business, therefore, unanimously and enthusiastically support Dr. Safner in his third year review and offer him its highest recommendation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jerry Van Winter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "J".

Jerry Van Winter

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