

January 30, 2019

Dear colleagues on the Senate Research Committee

I am delighted to nominate my colleague Dr Patrick Howard, faculty member in the Department of Education, for the President's Award for Excellence in Research.

Patrick's impressive cv speaks for itself but what stands out for me is not just the quantity and diversity of his outputs but his commitment to research that is of high quality and of real value to people's lives and communities. He has produced numerous peer-reviewed publications, been involved in many substantial externally funded research projects, and is frequently consulted as an expert to advise on matters related to the future of education across Canada and beyond. In his ten years with CBU Patrick has concluded more high-quality research projects than many academics manage to do over the course of an entire career.

Three core areas of peer-reviewed scholarly activity stand out in his cv: environmental and sustainability education; phenomenology and human science research; and creativity and arts-based research. Each of these areas is of crucial importance to education in our times, and they all inform one another. Educating for sustainability requires insights from phenomenology to understand the lived experience of others, as well as awareness of how arts-based education can engender creativity, insight and transformation.

The relationship between these three themes is illustrated in the research-led Master of Education Program in Sustainability, Creativity and Innovation, the development of which Patrick spearheaded together with his departmental colleague Catherine O'Brien. This highly innovative and successful graduate program is cutting-edge in the world in that it is strongly informed by Patrick's own research, thereby offering graduate students the opportunity to be mentored by someone widely recognized for his research activity and impact in the field. At CBU Patrick has successfully supervised the work of six master's students since the program was launched in 2016 and, as is evident from his cv, he is frequently called on to support graduate students elsewhere, to participate on doctoral examining committees, review for journals and to promote high quality phenomenological research methodological expertise internationally.

Before I proceed to substantiate these introductory remarks with highlights from his cv, and in direct reference to the selection criteria, I would like to add that as his Dean I am aware not only of his research activities but also his tireless commitment to helping students learn, improving public education and supporting our communities. Despite his high level of engagement in these areas, he is also always willing to assist others in their research. When I asked him to join the School Committee on Advancing Research Excellence and Scholarship (CARES), a new committee we launched last year with the intent to strengthen the research environment in the school, he readily agreed and since then has played a leading role in the activities of this committee (including giving a presentation on the nature and value of reflectivity in

professional practice and research and leading a seminar on phenomenological research methods later this year). In summary, not only is Patrick a stellar researcher as measured by traditional criteria of scholarship, but he is also an exemplary academic citizen and colleague, always happy to support and advance the knowledge, well-being and careers of others. In summary, Patrick is highly deserving of the President's Award for Excellence in Research.

Below please find my detailed rationale for this claim.

Productivity

Patrick is the author of numerous peer-reviewed articles published in high quality academic journals, and has published several chapters in edited volumes, including influential texts such as the encyclopedia of *Educational Philosophy and Theory* and the handbook on *Hermeneutic phenomenology in education: Method and practice*. He also contributed several reviews of influential texts such as his thoughtful analysis of "*Interpreting Nature: The emerging field of environmental hermeneutics* (New York: Fordham University, 2014) and *Paradigms of Research for the 21st Century: Perspectives and Examples from Practice* (New York: Peter Lang, 2013). He also is a frequent contributor to professional journals, thereby extending the reach of his work.

Research articles in education are typically comprehensive theory-based essays of 7000-10,000 words in length, depending on the journal. While co-authorship is not the norm in education, some of Patrick's articles are co-authored illustrating his commitment to fellow researchers. Since productivity (as in quantity) is not easily compared across disciplines, I add that getting a single-authored (or co-authored for that matter) article ready for submission to a high caliber journal in education can take up to a year. Patrick also contributes frequently to reputable peer-reviewed conferences in his field. Currently, he is working on two significant books, one on Living Schools (a concept described below) and one on Phenomenology (both accepted for publication).

Creativity

Patrick is a leading scholar in the area of education for sustainability, which is concerned with the interconnected global issues that impact our ecological systems, the viability of economies and communities as well as the health and well-being of people. Building on this understanding but recognizing that the purpose of education has to include enabling *well-being for all*— that is for the individual, the community and for the 'other than human' life on our planet, he has helped to extend the purpose and potential of sustainability education in important and creative ways. Together with Catherine O'Brien he introduced the concept of a Living School, thereby offering practical suggestions for the provision of transformative education that are located in a sound philosophical framework.

Influence and Impact

Patrick's research has influenced the development of the Accord on sustainability education in Canada. The concept of Living Schools has been taken up by numerous educators in Canada. His many publications also in professional journals furthered the reach of this work beyond academic audiences. The text he is preparing with Catherine will be influential and provide educators with a practical framework, implementation strategies, and inspirational case studies of schools, teachers, administrators, and parents who exemplify the Living School ethos. His work on phenomenology is widely used in graduate courses and by researchers around the world. His cv lists the many students at graduate and undergraduate level he has supervised and mentored.

Recognition

Patrick is recognized nationally and internationally as an authority in environmental and sustainability education, phenomenology as well as creativity and arts-based education. Evidence of his recognition in these fields is demonstrated by his cv but I shall emphasize the following:

He has been principal or co-applicant on no fewer than three successful SSHRC grant applications and a proposal for a fourth one (a SSHRC Partnership Development Grant, the goal of which is to establish a Pan- Canadian Teacher Education Consortium for ESE), was submitted last fall. In addition, his cv shows four additional funded projects including one that attracted support through the Cape Breton Health Research Grant Fund.

Three years ago he presented at the National Roundtable on Environmental and Sustainability Education in Teacher Education at Trent University and since then has assumed a leadership role with the newly formed organization. He serves as an executive member of the national committee which has become a Standing Committee of the Canadian Network for Environmental Education & Communication. The Environmental and Sustainability Education in Teacher Education National Committee is dedicated to advancing high quality environmental and sustainability education through research, policy, and professional development. His many contributions to this committee involved presenting to the Association of Canadian Deans of Education at the Congress in Regina last year, to further their work on the development of an Accord on Environmental and Sustainability Education in Teacher Education. This year he will present results from a national survey that establishes the status of the field of Environmental and Sustainability Education in Teacher Education in Canada at the annual meeting of the American Education Research Association (AERA). AERA is regarded worldwide as the most prestigious and most competitive research conference in education. Together with Catherine O'Brien Patrick has been commissioned to write a book on *Living Schools: Educating for the World Our Children Deserve*. As noted earlier, this book will provide educators with a practical framework and implementation strategies for creating a Living School. He has also been invited to contribute an article for a special themed issue of the Canadian Journal of Environmental Education.

In the area of arts-based education I add that he was invited to serve on the Board of the *Atlantic Centre for Creativity* based at the University of New Brunswick. He also is the organizer of this year's conference featuring research on creative development. Recognition as a leading researcher in phenomenology is evidenced by him serving as co-editor of the journal

Phenomenology & Practice. Note that he is frequently called upon to share his expertise through invited seminars, and as external examiner, reviewer of articles and editor. Another strong indicator of recognition is a contract he recently signed with Taylor & Francis on a forthcoming book titled *Phenomenology and Educational Theory in Conversation: back to Education Itself*. Co-editors are Tone Sævi, Andrew Foran & Gert Biesta. Gert Biesta is among the most reputable educational theorists and philosophers of education in the world.

Concluding comment

I trust that this detailed letter --hopefully read in conjunction with Patrick's cv-- provides the committee with sufficient information to recognize Patrick's outstanding achievements in research in the field of education. Patrick Howard has set a brilliant example of what it means to be engaged in high quality and high impact research, making the quantity of his output even more impressive. I cannot think of anyone more deserving of this award.

Respectfully,



Carolin Kreber
Professor of Education
Dean, School of Professional Studies