



SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

January 21, 2019

Re: Nomination of Patrick Howard for President's Award for Excellence in Research

Dear Research Committee members,

It is my great pleasure to recommend my colleague, Dr. Patrick Howard, for the President's Award for Excellence in Research. Patrick's CV clearly indicates his commitment to research excellence and the diversity of his contributions. As you will have observed from his curated list of "Research Highlights" he is contributing to several fields, including sustainability education, phenomenology and human science, as well as creativity and arts-based research. His publication record is impressive with an extensive array of book chapters and peer-reviewed journal articles in addition to co-editing *two* forthcoming books. I would like to underscore the significance of Patrick's work in the areas of sustainability and environmental education in particular. While recommendations regarding education for sustainable development (ESD) have been globally recognized since the 1992 Earth Summit, the K-12 sector of education has been very slow to incorporate these recommendations. In fact, in 2005, a UNESCO document questioned whether education is contributing to solutions or part of the problem with respect to the global sustainability issues that urgently need to be addressed. In this era of climate change and extensive environmental challenges, leadership in sustainability education is vital. Patrick has emerged as a prominent leader in Canada, as demonstrated by his executive role on the Standing Committee of the Canadian Network for Environmental Education and Communication.

Our department has also benefitted from his expertise as we have developed our mission statement that embraces sustainability education. I collaborated with Patrick to develop our ground breaking MEd(Sustainability, Creativity, & Innovation) program that is at the forefront of graduate education offerings in this country. Admittedly, I'm biased but my bold statement about the MEd is also supported by the educators who consistently tell us that this program exceeds their expectations and stood out in their searches for a meaningful course of study that would not simply lead to 'checking off the box' that leads to a license/pay increase. This past week, for example, a vice principal in a Calgary high school wrote to us with tremendous excitement about their new superintendent, Christopher Usih. She wrote that,

his main focuses are: Well-being, Sustainability, Entrepreneurship, and Indigenous Education! I cannot believe how relevant every single course I have taken through Cape Breton University has been to the work I do with staff and students! Thank you so much for giving me the tools to really impact the learning of students right now and into the future!

Patrick and I are also editing a book on the topic of Living Schools – an approach to transforming education that we have developed together. Living Schools integrate many of the recommendations for 21st century learning, embedded in a vision of well-being for all, sustainably. Patrick's experience with editing is vital to this project and I deeply appreciate collaborating with a colleague who has such a progressive vision for transforming education. Recognition of Living Schools is growing nationally, with many of our graduate students choosing to explore Living Schools as a major theme in their thesis research. Dawson College, in Montreal, hosted the first Living Schools Symposium in the spring of 2018 and this year Concordia University has offered to host a Living Schools Symposium as well.

In summary, we can assess Patrick's research on strictly academic grounds of research contributions and he would most certainly excel. I believe that we must also attend to the significance of his research for inspiring educators and policy makers to adapt education to meet the time sensitive needs of our global community.

Kind regards,



Catherine O'Brien

Associate Professor, Education