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January 19, 2011

Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching Review Committee
Faculty Appointments and Advancement
Office of Academic Affairs
Administrative Building, Room 126
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis
Indianapolis, IN 46202

To the Review Committee:

I am writing in support of the application of Bob Bringle for the Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching.

I have enormous respect for Bob and the work that he has done on the national level to engage the higher education community in discussions of teaching and learning around issues of civic engagement. His work has contributed to our understanding of the critical role of service learning in student engagement, learning outcomes, and civic participation. One of the many contributions he has made to the civic engagement movement is the development of an assessment tool for universities to use in measuring civic outcomes, the Civic Minded Graduate scale.

Until I reviewed his file, I was less familiar with his teaching record. What I am struck by, in reviewing his work, is the centrality of teaching to all that he has done. It begins with his statement on his philosophy of teaching, which I found to be thoughtful and informed. I loved the reference to theoretical ideas from individuals like Postman, Weingarten, Neill, and Kolb but I was also impressed with the way that was translated into practice. For me, the crucial line in that statement of teaching was this: "My role as a designer of learning opportunities for my students (versus being only a lecturer) became clearer and significantly influenced my classroom teaching strategies across my career." I have been arguing lately that in this age of technology, where we are immersed in content, the faculty role cannot simply be that of delivering content but instead, faculty must be designers of learning environments. Bob simply came to that conclusion a lot sooner than I did.

His commitment to teaching, and its centrality to everything else in his professional life, is also found in his account of the students he has mentored, in the work that he has done

in other parts of the world, and in his administrative roles at the university. In each of his activities, there always seems to be an element of teaching involved. Notably, Bob has been involved in a substantial amount of sponsored research, virtually all involving teaching. If you review his notable record of publications, again you find the focus on teaching. He has also organized national and international conferences; virtually all of them address issues of teaching and learning.

Bob's career is also marked consistently by recognition of his teaching excellence. His narrative notes the following awards: four departmental Teaching Excellence Recognition Awards, SOS Teaching Award, the John A. Whitsel Award for Professional Staff from IUPUI Student Affairs, and the W. George Pinnell Award For Outstanding Service from Indiana University. He has earned an impressive number of other awards and recognitions over his career, most of them focused on teaching.

It is hard to imagine how many people Bob has influenced through his career, both those who had the good fortune to work directly with him, and those whose lives were shaped by his ideas. I do know this. The field of civic engagement, and IUPUI, have been immeasurably enriched by Bob's work, his vision, and his passion. I can think of few others who are as deserving as Bob Bringle for this prestigious award. I enthusiastically endorse him. I hope that upon the occasion of his retirement, he will receive this final recognition of a life of generous service and substantial contribution.

Sincerely yours,

George L. Mehaffy
Vice President for Academic Leadership and Change
American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU)