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Dear Dr. Breault and Ashland University:

I am writing to nominate retired Trustees Professor Dr. Jane Piirto for Emeritus Status. Her service to the University has been long and varied, her teaching has been strong and rigorous, and her scholarly work in the fields of creativity, poetry, teaching, and many aspects of meeting the needs of gifted children continues to be far-reaching and well respected throughout the country and abroad. Moreover, to all of that I can add that Dr. Piirto – Jane – connects deeply to her students in a way that is unique and powerful.

Dr. Piirto joined Ashland University in 1988. During her 30 years of service to the University she chaired the Department Promotion and Tenure Committee as well as the Institutional Promotion and Tenure Committee, of which she was elected member at large. She acted as Faculty Senate Representative for the College of Education, participated as a member of the Professional Standards Committee, the International Studies Committee, the Honors Advisory Committee and the Graduate Council.

As an instructor, Dr. Piirto owns a reputation as a powerhouse: knowledgeable and rigorous, with very high expectations for her students. While she spent much of her time teaching and developing curriculum in Talent Development, she also instructed in Contemporary Issues in Education, Qualitative Research and Developing Multiple Intelligences in the Classroom, among others. In addition, she was the methodology advisor on no fewer than 15 dissertation committees between 1998 and 2009. She supervised over 600 graduate students as they worked through their MEd practicum, thesis, and inquiry seminar capstones. Ohio schools are replete with quality Gifted Intervention Specialists thanks to her and the Ashland University Talent Development program – and I hope this continues to be so.

However, it is in the area of scholarly research, writing and speaking that you can see Dr. Piirto's enduring legacy. Standing on the Ashland University name, she has written eight scholarly books, with *Understanding Creativity* and *Talented Children and Adults* both in their third editions. *Understanding Creativity* continues to be cutting-edge work on creativity as creative individuals do it, and Ashland University's "Creativity for Teachers of the Talented" course still moves teachers to deeply explore a more personal and spiritual connection to their own creativity and to their teaching. She speaks of the "thorn" as that which extends beyond "mere" talent and is a deeper and mysterious desire – a calling – that drives and motivates us. It was life changing

and life affirming for me, and I can see that it continues to be so for the teachers I work with in our program.

This depth of feeling permeates Dr. Piirto's scholarly work. She has hundreds of published articles, from topics of creativity to Dabrowski's Over Excitabilities Theory, Gifted and Talented Education and a myriad of issues within it, women and pedagogy, and curriculum practices in India. She has led workshops, sessions, and has keynoted hundreds of conferences and gatherings, from Atlanta to Los Angeles, and from Moscow to Prague, from Rhodes, Greece to Barcelona, Spain, and to the farthest reaches of India.

Here at home, Dr. Piirto is a Trustees Distinguished Professor at Ashland University, appointed in 1998 and only the fourth in the history of the University. Her shelves are also bursting with national and international awards. To name a few: a Fulbright-Hays Fellowship in Argentina in 1990, *Ohio Magazine* Educator of Distinction, 2004; Ohio Association for Gifted Children Higher Education Award in 2007; Mensa Education and Research Foundation's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2007; National Association for Gifted Children Distinguished Scholar Award in 2010. She continues to amass awards, as in July of 2017 she received the International Creativity Award by the World Council for the Gifted and Talented in Sydney, Australia. She keynoted that conference.

As I researched to prepare for writing this letter, I also found a little notation on Jane's vitae from 1957: Betty Crocker Homemaker of the Year, and this made me smile. In this final part of my nomination I would like to talk more about my mentor, colleague and friend, Jane. You see, in 1957 young women did not grow up to be scholars, they grew up to be nurses, housewives, and teachers. It inspires me to think that Jane pushed through these expectations of the time – the zeitgeist as she loves to point out in her text *Talented Children and Adults* – and turned her teacher-self into a scholar-self, never forgetting her creative-self.

Jane also has the uncanny knack of remembering her many students, their background, their previous lives, where and what they teach, and their most interesting assignments and products. She is our connector – most of my closest friends are in my life because of my time working with her, and with the Ashland Summer Honors Institute, which I have yet to mention, but is a hallmark in an already illustrious career. Let me do so now. Two weeks every summer for almost 20 years Ashland University teemed with teenaged gifted students from all over the state. Long lines of them at Convo at lunchtime, gaggles of them outside the dorm singing to guitars and drums in the evening, intense little groups of them huddled over Plato's *Republic* or extracting DNA from earthworms during the classes. She brought in more than one million dollars in state funds to the University, connecting AU instructors, national scholars, speakers and teachers, undergraduate students as dorm staff, and graduate students from the Talent Development Program and made a little bit of magic for a lot of us.

Her Creativity Salons are famous within her circle of friends and colleagues. So much food, so many stories, and raucous singing to her piano playing long into the night. These are the things I will remember about our Jane, long after the awards get dusty and the articles yellow with age. She taught and led with passion, intellect, and her deep-rooted thorn was a driving force for her to learn more, share more, write more, and create more.

Therefore, considering her service, her teaching, and her scholarly work, it is my honor to nominate my mentor, colleague and friend, Dr. Jane Piirto, 1957 Betty Crocker Homemaker of the Year, for Emeritus Status with Ashland University.

If you have any questions or need further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours most sincerely,

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