

SECTION: 5
DATE:
April 20, 2023

BOARD OF REGENTS
EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

RECOMMENDATION

HONORARY EMERITUS FACULTY STATUS

ACTION REQUESTED

It is recommended that the Board of Regents grant Honorary Emeritus Status for Meritorious Service to Dr. Theresa Merrill, who provided 12 years of service to Eastern Michigan University as a professor and director.

During her time at the University, Dr. Merrill was a well regarded faculty member who took on the role of Director of Music Therapy. The program grew substantially under her guidance in terms of applicants and graduates. She maintained relationships with several donors, which allowed the department to expand their resources and offer scholarships to a number of students. She also co-founded the Minor in Critical Disability Studies program.

Dr. Merrill was and continues to be an important member of the University both inside and outside of her department. She was heavily involved in teaching and shaping curriculum as well as an active member of several university committees.

STAFF SUMMARY

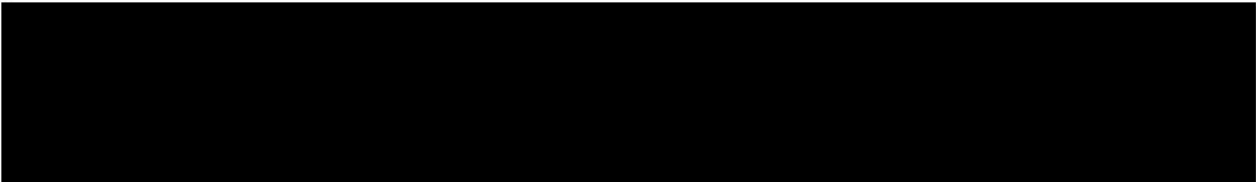
According to University policy, retiring employees who have served the University for fewer than 15 years may be granted Honorary Emeritus Status for Meritorious Service. Candidates for honorary emeritus status must have a significant number of years of service and a record of meritorious performance in one or more of the following: (a) a substantive record of scholarly achievement commensurate with national or international standards within the specific discipline, (b) a record of outstanding teaching and or educational contributions, (c) clear evidence of service to the University beyond the normal expectations, (d) clear evidence of exceptional institutional leadership, advancement of the University or extraordinary service to students.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS

None

ADMINISTRATIVE RECOMMENDATION

The proposed Board action has been reviewed and is recommended for Board approval.





EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
Academic and Student Affairs

EMERITUS FACULTY STATUS RECOMMENDATION

The Department or School of Music and Dance recommends the awarding of Emeritus Faculty Status for the following retiring/retired faculty member:

Name of Faculty Member: Dr. Theresa Merrill

Current Status/Rank at EMU: Retired Professor of Music Therapy, Part Time Lecturer

Date of Hire at EMU: September 2010 Retirement Date: April 2022

Number of Years at EMU: 12 years as FT; please see attached rationale for exception
(Minimum of 15 years of service required)

Degree(s)/Institutions Doctoral: Ph.D. Music Education/Therapy, Michigan State Univ
Masters: Master of Music Therapy, British Columbia Open Univ.
Baccalaureate: Bach.-Music Therapy, British Columbia Open Univ.

Please Attach a Brief Statement of Support to this 2 page application

Emeritus Faculty status is contingent upon the approval of the Board of Regents. Candidates, once approved, will be awarded Emeritus status after their official retirement date. This information will be kept on file in the Provost's Office.

Debra Gombert, PhD. MT-BC January 21, 2023
Recommended by (please print) Date

[Redacted] January 22, 2023 [Redacted] 01.23.23
Department Head Date Dean Date

[Redacted]

Date Submitted to Board of Regents

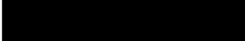
Please continue to page 2 of this application.

Please complete the following information on the retiring/retired faculty member for whom you are submitting this recommendation. This information will NOT be shared in the Board of Regents meeting materials but is necessary for the retiree to receive his or her emeritus benefits.

Name: Dr. Theresa Merrill

 _____

Home Address:  _____

Telephone:  E-Mail Address: tmerrill@emich.edu

Please forward this completed 2 page form to:

Provost Office
Academic and Student Affairs
106 Welch Hall

EASTERN
MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
MUSIC THERAPY

January 21, 2023

To Whom It May Concern,

I am enthusiastically nominating Dr. Theresa (Terra) Merrill for Emeritus Faculty status. Dr. Merrill retired in April 2022, after 12 years as Professor and Director of Music Therapy in the School of Music & Dance at Eastern Michigan University. She deserves to be granted an exception to the requirement of 15 years of service for several reasons. First, Dr. Merrill came to EMU with 2 years of service rank credit, having already distinguished herself as a professor, international scholar, and clinician with over 20 years of prior experience. Furthermore, Dr. Merrill retired in 2022 only because she was asked to consider the VERIP early retirement package. Indeed, her commitment to EMU and the discipline remain strong; her intellectual and creative contributions to the field of Music Therapy and to EMU are ongoing. She continues to teach – one pivotal music therapy course each term of 2022-23 – and supervise students as a valued Part-time Lecturer.

Additionally, Dr. Merrill remains a consultant and research mentor through the University of Michigan School of Dentistry and maintains a private clinical practice. She is continuing her scholarship and engaging in service such as organizing the next international Association for Music & Imagery (AMI) conference. Dr. Merrill exemplifies best academic practices and continues to exceed expectations in teaching, research, and service. In her time at EMU, she advocated successfully for new hires, dramatically reduced attrition in Music Therapy, and brought in 4 new music therapy scholarships. In short, she led the program to national prominence. Across campus, she empowered the Autism Collaborative and co-founded the Critical Disability Studies minor.

Terra Merrill arrived at EMU in 2010 - already visionary - with a doctorate in Music Education and concentration in Music Therapy, during a period when the usual terminal was a Master's degree. Longtime Music Therapy Professor Roberta Justice outlines Merrill's energetic, forward-thinking approach at EMU by offering that Merrill "established focus groups and developed a plan for a Master of Music Therapy degree. In that time period, she also contributed to EMU community outreach and collaborations by developing a music therapy support group for People with Parkinson's Disease in the community which has grown, is ongoing and provides training opportunities for music therapy students." Justice continues, describing how Merrill was unexpectedly catapulted to the position of Director of Music Therapy. "In 2012 Terra inherited the program director's position after the sudden passing of our colleague. She had no transitional material or training provided yet kept the program going. She initiated changes in some aspects of the program which improved the lives of music therapy students."

Thus, early in her EMU tenure, Dr. Merrill effected a complete program re-certification and approval, which involved curricular revisions and development to align with the most current AMTA guidelines, resulting in a cutting-edge program. As a result, notes Dr. Howard Cass, EMU professor and internationally recognized composer, a staggering 99% of EMU Music Therapy grads are employed within 6 months of completing their internships. As another Music professor commented, Merrill was "nurturing the finest future music therapists." Justice best summarizes Merrill's guidance and

achievements: “Under her leadership the program grew substantially, both in applicants and graduates. She initiated a method for accepting the best-qualified applicants while still being culturally sensitive. She negotiated for two additional full-time faculty members to accommodate the program’s growth. She negotiated for needed changes in the undergraduate course and skill requirements to keep the program in a national top spot. She developed and incorporated programming in cultural and more advanced disability awareness, both in the music therapy program and campus wide. She improved supervision training for practicum supervisors. Additionally, she developed a mentorship program for the regional music therapy organization.”

Dr. Cass, states that colleagues in the School “enthusiastically recommend Dr. Theresa (Terra), Merrill, Professor, Advanced Clinical Supervisor, Guided Imagery and Music Facilitator, and Counselor in Training, for the honor of Emeritus Professor at Eastern Michigan University.” He continues that from 2010-22, “Dr. Merrill has directed the Music Therapy program at EMU during a time of great transition and enormous challenges. She has led and developed this important area in the School of Music & Dance with extraordinary effort and passion, and the result is a nationally recognized Music Therapy program. The statistics related to this are incredibly impressive: under Dr. Merrill’s direction, the student attrition rate has been reduced from 94% to 11%; the number of Music Therapy majors has increased from 29 to a high of 92 and now averages 72 (from 2014 till the start of the pandemic); and very notably, the EMU Music Therapy program has achieved a ranking of 10th nationwide from TheBestSchools.org out of 92 music therapy programs. Dr. Merrill has managed this remarkable accomplishment through immense dedication and inspirational guidance.” Indeed, Professor Dan Foster from Music and Dance highlights Dr. Merrill’s one-on-one dedication to music therapy students stating, “what stands out for me is her sometimes gentle and sometimes fierce, but always strong advocacy for students in emotional or financial need. And, based on the experience of my own Music Therapy majors, her thoughtful approach to every student as an individual, seeking out and helping them to develop their particular strengths.”

Merrill has also invited and maintained strong relationships with significant donors including the Brehm Centers at Eastern Michigan University and at the University of Michigan. In fact, donations supported a complete technological rehab in the Music Therapy Center on campus to provide current, discipline-specific clinical experience for students and service to the disabled community. Additionally, three significant scholarships annually support music therapy students financially during their focused senior years, as well as required 6–12 month internships, with placements across the U.S. and internationally. These donor funds flowing through the department this year exceeded \$50,700.

Additional pivotal curricular innovation and impressive cross-campus collaboration sprang from Dr. Merrill’s research commitment to therapeutic work for persons with disabilities. She stands as a co-founder of the unique EMU interdisciplinary Minor in Critical Disability Studies Minor. This led Dr. Merrill naturally to her standing on the Provost’s Task Force on Disability. Dr. Beth Currans, Professor and Department Head, from Women’s and Gender Studies and Program Administrator, Critical Disability Studies praises Dr. Merrill’s contributions to this new program as, “invaluable”, and details that “She offered a practice-oriented perspective that helped shape and deepen our curriculum. Her experience as a music therapist helped keep us grounded when we risked getting too caught up in the theoretical framing of our work. She also showed up. She came to meetings. She offered perspectives. She took on tasks. Her dedication to our mission and our students was exemplary.”

To fully grasp Dr. Merrill's academic depth, notice other important Service with numerous committees, including being a highly active and meaningful voice on the College Advisory Council, the Provost's Committee on Safe Return, and holding a three-year membership on the CAS Committee on Diversity and Inclusion.

Certainly, colleagues recognize Dr. Merrill's "amazing competence and mastery in her field" and, as Dr. Cass ultimately comments, "Dr. Merrill's wonderful generosity of spirit, and exemplary leadership has resulted in the Music Therapy program expanding to become a vital and vibrant area of our university." Additionally, as Cass continues, her "vision of developing a high-profile, successful, supportive, and contemporary Music Therapy program at EMU has been fully realized through her vast knowledge, experience, and selfless commitment to education and service, which has benefited the entire EMU community." This is underscored by Dr. Curran's comprehensive viewpoint that this colleague "shaped our institution during her tenure. We have been irrevocably and positively changed because of her efforts. Her diligent, groundbreaking work deserves to be honored." Dr. MeeAe Nam, who was the Ronald W. Collins Distinguished Faculty *Artistic* Award Recipient in 2020, considers the depth and breadth of Dr. Merrill's professional expertise, leadership, and creativity. Dr. Nam comments, "Dr. Merrill is one of the most prolific members of the School of Music and Dance and is recognized regionally, nationally, and internationally for her scholarly activities and contributions to the field. It is also no surprise that her retirement [goal] is to continue further achieving her academic career [MA in Clinical Mental Health Counseling, 2023 at EMU] and broadening her practice to positively impact the field." As described, "Her passion, strong drive, and commitment led her to be a distinguished scholar, researcher, educator, presenter, entrepreneur, performer, and leader."

I recommend Dr. Merrill to you for Emeritus status with full departmental support; she inspires as a faculty member of exceptional capabilities, with quality, quantity, and depth in her work. She has achieved above and beyond the usual expectations along with recognition on the national and international levels. She has and continues to take the reputation of Eastern Michigan University into our community, as well as nation-wide and into international circles. Dr. Merrill remains recognized, per definition of Emeritus Professor, as a valued colleague who has achieved excellence and played a significant role in her field and contributed significantly to academic life.

Respectfully submitted,



Debra Gombert, PhD, MT-BC
Associate Professor and Director of Music Therapy
EMU School of Music & Dance