



To: Rank, Promotion and Tenure Committee
From: Dr. Elizabeth McDermott, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Re: Dr. Kevin Spicer, Associate Professor of English
Cc: Dr. Kevin Spicer (Chair, Department of English and Foreign Languages)
Date: October 15, 2023

This letter is written enthusiastic support of Dr. Kevin Spicer's application for promotion to full professor. Dr. Spicer has served as an associate professor of English since being granted tenure and promotion to associate professor in 2018; he joined USF as an assistant professor in 2012. Over the course of his time at USF, Dr. Spicer has demonstrated sustained excellence in teaching, scholarship, and service, and I therefore strongly recommend that he be promoted to full professor.

Teaching: A recipient of a Distinguished Teaching Award in 2017, Dr. Spicer teaches undergraduate general education courses, courses for majors in the English department, and grad courses he developed in collaboration with the College of Education's REAL program. Dr. Spicer is also a much sought-after mentor for USF students across the disciplines. It would be unusual to wander the halls and not see Dr. Spicer's office door ajar with a student or two in conversation about a text they just read and want to understand (see also letters of support from Dr. Leia Levy and Ms. Jennifer Ethridge). Students know that Dr. Spicer's knowledge about his discipline, coupled with his listening skills and natural affinity for mentorship, lead them to critical questions that are guaranteed to result in further learning on the topic in question. They appreciate that Dr. Spicer gives them "freedom, autonomy, and choice," as he writes in his reflection on teaching. Such freedom includes relating content in their general education courses to their major areas of study and having the opportunity to form a community with other students around a specific text. Conversation with students comes so easily to Dr. Spicer that I have often found myself recommending that they walk over and speak with him about a particular text, course, or philosophical question. Dr. Lisa Hedrick describes Dr. Spicer's affinity for mentoring students who are looking for a deeper engagement with their studies at USF:

Dr. Spicer challenges these students by engaging them in discussion and argumentation. He offers alternative views. He pushes back on what the students already think or believe. He opens up doors, or perhaps windows, by sharing with them writings of academics they likely never heard of. He brings them into the conversation, listening to them as well as asking them to actually think bigger. For these students, Dr. Spicer's tutelage, engagement, mentorship is pivotal to their education.

Dr. Spicer is also adept at fostering such conversations online. As he writes in his portfolio: "Designing good discussion board prompts for fully online/asynchronous courses are a necessary component of good classes, but it is far from sufficient. In addition to this, faculty feedback is also of the utmost importance."

As Dr. Spicer points out in his teaching reflection, he is using “various ‘direct’ measures of student thoughts about [his] courses,” including final projects, exit interviews, emails from students, etc., as data for reflection on his teaching. He writes, “The story I want to tell here is one where numbers alone just couldn't ever hope to cut it.” Taking those other measures into account, along with the faculty averages in the table below, contributes to the sustained excellence in teaching that warrants Dr. Spicer’s promotion to the rank of professor at USF.

Kevin Spicer	SP23	FL22	SU22	SP22	FL21	SU21	SP21
Response Rate %	32%	29%	25%	49%	46%	24%	44%
Excellent Teacher: (A)	4.3	4.3	5.0	4.8	5.0	4.6	5.0
(B)	4.7	5.0		4.8	5.0		4.7
(C)	5.0	4.6		4.8	4.9		
(D)	4.8	5.0		5.0			
Fac. Avg.	4.7	4.725	5.0	4.85	4.97	4.6	4.85
(CAS Avg.)	(4.49)	(4.36)	(4.49)	(4.4)	(4.37)	(4.6)	(4.48)
Excellent Course: (A)	4.7	4.0	4.3	4.4	4.8	5.0	4.9
(B)	4.7	4.3		4.5	4.8		4.7
(C)	5.0	4.6		4.8	4.6		
(D)	4.5	4.3		5.0			
Fac. Avg.	4.73	4.3	4.3	4.68	4.73	5.0	4.8
(CAS Avg.)	(4.3)	(4.1)	(4.24)	(4.15)	(3.88)	(4.4)	(4.15)

Scholarship: Dr. Spicer has recently collaborated on scholarship with two alumni, both of whom began their research with him as USF students. The first essay, co-written with William Mastin, is under review at *The Hemingway Review*. Mr. Mastin was a math major and is currently pursuing a masters in philosophy at Loyola University, a program he sought admittance to in consultation with Dr. Spicer. The second essay, with MaKenzie Munson, is forthcoming in *The Routledge Handbook of Crime Fiction and Ecology* this month. Ms. Munson was a double major in English and Political Science and is currently pursuing doctoral studies as well. As Dr. Spicer writes in his reflection on scholarship, this article co-authored with Ms. Munson “is going to be the very first of its kind linking these two genres and arenas of academic study together.”

Dr. Spicer also recently published an article in *Fafnir: Nordic Journal of Science Fiction and Fantasy Research*, as well as a book review in *Cider Press Review*. With Dr. Ioanes, Dr. Spicer attended the South Bend Digital Humanities Research Institute in 2019. As Dr. Ioanes writes in a letter of support, this institute was important to their development of “Digital Humanities programming at USF.” She continues: “Since this time, Dr. Spicer has built on that experience to learn to code, infusing his new knowledge into his teaching, as well as departmental workflows and mentorship of students.” Dr. Spicer’s experience in the domain of scholarship also applies to his mentorship of English Department faculty. Dr. Ioanes writes, “Not only has Dr. Spicer read nearly all of the scholarship I have produced since my time at USF, but he has directly shaped

my research through these conversations.” Dr. Spicer’s scholarly activity since receiving tenure in 2018 more than warrants promotion to full professor.

Service: Dr. Spicer served as Department Chair of English and Foreign Languages between 2018-2022; he then resumed the chair position this semester. As he points out in his reflection on “Service to the Department,” his time as chair has included “the planning and implementation of the six graduate-level courses for teachers.” Dr. Ioanes further relates this program design to the work of being department chair:

He spearheaded the development of six courses for the REAL program, which would credential high school English teachers to teach dual enrollment College Writing courses. Dr. Spicer’s democratic and collegial approach to departmental initiatives are on full display in this example. From the beginning, he involved me in the design of these courses and worked with all of us in the department to envision the program. He did the yeoman’s work of developing the curricula and moving all courses through faculty governance

Drs. Spicers and Ioanes also developed the Digital Humanities curriculum and ushered that major through governance—a significant undertaking. Finally, in addition to serving as chair, Dr. Spicer has advised numerous senior capstones as listed on his CV.

Dr. Spicer’s service to the university since receiving tenure includes serving as a Duns Scotus Honors Society Faculty Advisor Board Member, participating in the post-tenure review for Prof. Paul Erschen, and serving on the Budget and Planning Enrollment Workgroup as CAS representative. He also has filled in for faculty on various university committees and participates in annual general education writing assessment. Taken altogether, Dr. Spicer’s service contributions certainly warrant promotion to full professor.

In a letter of support, William Mastin writes about how his relationship with Dr. Spicer began somewhat haphazardly, and could have gone quite differently:

Who would have predicted the result—the two become the best of friends and continue to study together for the next three years, and for the foreseeable (and unforeseeable) future. How inclusive must such a professor have been at a first meeting! Such tolerance, it seems to me, is nothing short of superhuman. This is the sort of inclusion present in Dr. Spicer’s pedagogy, as well as his study: the radical acceptance and positive valuation of every singularity.

USF is lucky to have Dr. Spicer’s inclusive pedagogy, as Mr. Mastin describes here, and as I have witnessed myself, many times. I’m pleased to recommend Dr. Spicer be granted promotion to full professor and look forward to his impact on the USF community in years to come.