



THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Potsdam

Claudia J. Ford, Professor
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Date: January 13, 2022

Re: Continuous Appointment & Promotion
Michael J. Popović

To: The Dean of Arts & Sciences, the Provost, and the President of SUNY Potsdam, and the
Chancellor of the State University of New York.

Esteemed Colleagues:

It is my great pleasure to recommend with enthusiasm and with no hesitation that Michael J. Popović be granted continuous appointment and promotion as a faculty member of SUNY Potsdam.

In my current role as Professor and Department Chair of the Environmental Studies department at SUNY Potsdam, as well as my recent role as Interim Associate Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer at SUNY Potsdam (September 2020 – December 2021) I have had ample opportunity to work with, observe, and assess the value that Professor Popović brings to our campus and to our profession. I could not be more wholehearted in my support for his candidacy for continuous appointment and promotion.

It is customary to assess colleagues who are in SUNY tenure review under the criteria and within the framework of Ernest L. Boyer's "Scholarship Reconsidered," (Princeton: The

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1990); I will combine and discuss some of these criteria and this framework relative to the tenure candidacy of Michael J. Popović. The criteria are: 1) mastery of subject matter; 2) effectiveness in teaching; 3) scholarly ability; 4) effectiveness of university service; and 5) continuing growth. Boyer's framework for scholarship includes: 1) the scholarship of discovery; 2) the scholarship of integration; 3) the scholarship of application; and 4) the scholarship of teaching.

Michael J. Popović - Mastery of subject matter and effectiveness in teaching: I discuss these two criteria together, as my direct knowledge of Michael Popović's mastery of his discipline is through Boyer's definition of the scholarship of teaching, which recognizes that, "Great teachers create a common ground of intellectual commitment. They stimulate active, not passive learning and encourage students to be critical, creative thinkers, with the capacity to go on learning after their college days are over." (Boyer) I have watched Michael interact with students and I have had many opportunities to interact with the students who have previously been in classroom settings with Michael. The students' praise of Michael's teaching is universal. I have especially noted that "his" students always go beyond commenting on Michael as a "good teacher" in a pedagogical sense, rather pointing out that Michael so clearly knows and is enthusiastic about his subject matter. That mastery of the discipline, in this case political science and international relations, translates into a classroom skill and enthusiasm that allows the students to blossom under his instruction and mentoring. Michael's advisees and politics students are simply bubbling over with their own fervor for the discipline. In other words, Michael's subject mastery and passion directly translates to intellectual curiosity and informed intent in the students that he teaches. The confirmation and evidence for the consequences of Michael's disciplinary mastery is that after leaving the Potsdam campus Michael's former students go on to achieve at an impressively high level in graduate school and their professions.

Michael J. Popović - Scholarly ability in discovery and integration: Michael's scholarship extends beyond the campus and the classroom. As an environmental studies specialist, I am particularly pleased that Michael has become an expert on the topic of climate change and human migration. This topic is cutting edge for both politics and environmental sustainability, and the research and scholarship that Michael is currently engaged in makes a significant contribution to this critical, timely field. This is the scholarship of integration at its finest, demonstrating Michael's ability to work across disciplines on critical topics of human knowledge that serve the interests of the larger community by continually interrogating the significance of specific scholarship. Michael is consistently responding to the question of how the knowledge of his field of politics and international relations can be made more useful and how that knowledge can be responsibly applied. I find that such a commitment to practical interdisciplinarity can be quite difficult, and I find Michael to be a colleague who surpasses at this interdisciplinary challenge.

Michael J. Popović - Effectiveness of university service and the scholarship of application: While Michael shines in all areas of scholarship and service, I find that it is in university service and the scholarship of application that Michael excels. I have direct knowledge and experience of Michael's value to the campus and the college community around the critical and demanding issues of justice, equity, diversity and inclusion. Michael applies his academic competence in diplomacy, dialogue, racial justice, and gender justice to the service needs of the campus in these areas. Michael is the first person that I called on to assist me as an advisor to the DEI division and the Chief Diversity Officer. Michael has undertaken absolutely essential work in First Year Connect, Days of Reflection, the Office of Gender and Sexuality, PDAM and other DEI initiatives. Michael undertakes this work in complete cooperation with faculty and staff colleagues, with the total involvement of students, and with full understanding of the importance of this work. Michael's organization of the First Year Connect program, which committee I am a member of, has been masterful, and showcased both his level of expertise and the good judgment that Michael is deservedly known for.

Michael J. Popović - Continuing growth: As one of Michael's senior colleagues and someone who has worked closely with him at SUNY Potsdam on a number of key tasks I am most excited about the potential Michael has for continuing growth in his profession and his discipline. This potential rises to the level of candidacy for promotion and continuous appointment precisely because Michael is fully cognizant of and committed to his own development as a scholar. I am thrilled to witness the amount of time that Michael has recently spent on his presentation, research and writing activities. This level of scholarship is difficult to maintain on a campus like Potsdam that so highly values teaching and service tasks. However, Michael manages to achieve at a high level in all of these areas of scholarship, and we need Michael's voice and scholarship to be known both on campus and in the wider community. It is satisfying for me to note that Michael's academic work is being disseminated. I am very confident that his research on migration and climate change will continue to find a wide and receptive audience, and I know that Michael is exactly the right person to take this pioneering scholarship forward.

I am also pleased to note that Michael continues to engage with the tasks of bringing dialogue and diplomacy – his areas of expertise – to the practical current challenges of racial and gender justice. Michael's hands on commitment to this work is confirmation of his ability to recognize when, where and how he can contribute to the campus and community while simultaneously acknowledging the areas where he is learning and growing. It is not an exaggeration to say that the community and the society are currently at a crossroads on these very issues of racial, gender and environmental justice that Michael excels at and is committed to. Michael's singular contributions to SUNY Potsdam in these areas can and must continue to be acknowledged and celebrated.

I can say with no hesitation that the Potsdam campus relies on Michael J. Popović for this acumen - his collaborative organizational skills and his student-centered approach to tasks and scholarship, along with his signature good judgment, diplomacy, and thoughtful execution

of responsibilities. I am pleased to recommend my colleague, Michael J. Popović, for your favorable consideration for promotion and continuous appointment at SUNY Potsdam. I hope that you will contact me if I can provide further or more detailed responses on any of these issues related to Professor Popović's scholarship and academic achievements.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Claudia J. Ford".

Claudia J. Ford, PhD