

Dean's Review of Tenure and Promotion Application
For Therissa A. Libby, Ph.D.
March 9, 2018

To: President Virginia Arthur
Provost Amy Gort
From: Francis J. Schweigert, Dean
College of Community Studies and Public Affairs
Re: Recommendation of Tenure and Promotion for Therissa A. Libby
Date: March 9, 2018

I have received Dr. Therissa Libby's documentation supporting her request for tenure and promotion from assistant to associate professor in accordance with the provisions of Article 22 and 25 of the Agreement between MinnState and the IFO. The following comments are based on my review of these documents.

First of all, I have a letter of support from her faculty colleagues in the Department of Human Services (HSER) expressing unanimous support for her tenure and promotion and summarizing her service and contributions to the department and its students. Their letter is an eloquent and detailed articulation of the most prominent features of Dr. Libby's work, from the persons in the best position to know the value of her contributions to students, the department, and the University. I would like to briefly highlight select items under each of the contract criteria. Under Criterion I, the faculty characterized Therissa as a challenging instructor who is able to guide students through difficult material, "pushing them to grow." They recounted the prodigious task she accomplished in completing the development of the Master of Science in Alcohol and Drug Counseling (MS ADC) and the Master of Science in Co-Occurring Disorders Counseling (MS CODC), including designing most the courses for these programs. The Criterion II achievements noted in the letter include presentations at professional and academic conferences, continuing education provided to ADC professionals and addiction studies instructors, Therissa's Recovery Narratives Project (RNP) capturing the experiences of persons in recovery, and leadership of the annual Understanding and Responding to Mass Incarceration (URMI) conference. For Criterion III, the faculty noted Therissa's participation in conferences and membership in professional associations. Three lines of activity were highlighted under Criterion IV: Therissa's personal and supportive work with applicants to the master's programs, her work as academic advisor, and her role as faculty advisor to the ADC Student Association. Therissa's achievements under Criterion V ranged from participation in college, department, and University meetings and committees to her leadership as college IFO convener. Outside the University, she currently president of the Minnesota Addiction Professionals (MNAP) and active in the work of Minnesota Recovery Connection.

Secondly, I have consulted Dr. Libby's professional development plans and reports for academic years 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017. I also have deans' reviews for AY2014, AY2016, and AY2017. The reports and reviews are consistent in recognizing Therissa's responsiveness to student feedback and effective development of the MS ADC-CODC programs. AY2017 marked a very successful year of recruitment, which AY 2018 is on track to replicate. The same

consistency appears in the reports and reviews of scholarly and creative activity with specific reference to the Recovery Narratives Project and academic or professional presentations. Therissa's dedication to on-going professional development, attention to advising students individually as well as the ADC Student Organization, and service to the University and larger community are also evident.

Thirdly, I have reviewed the forty letters of support Dr. Libby provided, each of which captures one or several important characteristics or contributions that mark her work. Without doing justice to the supporters' multiple and rich acknowledgements—which represent faculty and professional perspectives—I want to recount several areas that accented.

- i. Many of the letters point to Therissa's excellence as an instructor. This is in part a recognition of her "advanced knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the profession of substance use disorders and co-occurring disorders counseling." It is also appreciation that she sets expectations for academic excellence and is always prepared. As an academic advisor summarized it, she succeeds in bringing students along with her through "her enthusiasm, creativity, humor, and ability to make difficult topics, such as pharmacology in relation to the brain and nervous system, easy to understand using analogies and various modes of explanation."
- ii. Therissa's development and leadership of the MS ADC-CODC curriculum was very highly regarded by faculty and external practitioners who see the clear need for this level of education. In addition to the formal program and course approvals, these master's programs have required the development of a network of service providers for interns. A faculty colleague noted that Therissa meets individually with every potential student to make sure they understand the program and are a good fit for it.
- iii. Closely related to her success in the classroom is her "clear understanding of and ability to implement best practices for community-engaged learning—that is, co-creation of clear learning goals; reciprocal benefits for students, faculty, and partners; integration into the curriculum; and intentional reflection and analysis of experiences." The center of this effort is Dr. Libby's "strong sense of responsibility to and genuine interest in student success."
- iv. Many of the letters also applauded Dr. Libby's leadership of the planning and convening of the Understanding and Responding to Mass Incarceration conference. Her patience, openness to ideas, and collaborative style make this an experience almost like family, one faculty colleague said. Another pointed out that Therissa "brings fresh new ideas we all learn from" which makes the entire experience enriching for the whole planning team.
- v. Dr. Libby's service within the University was noted in many of the letters, often in relation to her leadership on the Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB). Her expertise in research was readily shared, as Therissa was "always ready to answer questions." Many also commented on Therissa's willingness to help, one giving the example of her help developing the IRBNet training in D2L to facilitate easier processing of HSRB applications. Therissa's service as convener for the CCSPA IFO Council was also cited as a model of fair and respectful facilitation in a challenging situation, given that this was

the first year of the college's existence and some faculty were quite contentious about the new arrangement.

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- vi. Therissa service on the Anti-Racism Leadership Team was applauded in numerous letters, not only as service to the University but as an instance of her “leadership qualities, her commitment to address social and racial inequalities, and her compassion”—at Metropolitan State University and in the larger community. For example she was recognized in her role as president of MNAP in 2016 for being “intentional in addressing issues of equity and inclusion in our profession in Minnesota. Counselors of color and culture face unique barriers in their professional development.”
- vii. Therissa’s scholarship was often cited as a strength. One letter noted that she had “published in a variety of outlets including academic journals, encyclopedias and industry and health care publications.” Several others pointed specifically to her creative work in strengthening the recovery community through her research in the Recovery Narratives, a “conception of knowledge that honors the voices of those so often dismissed.” This project was seen to address the overlooked process of recovery: “How do people recover? What motivates people to recover and what is it like to be in the recovery process? What is recovery?”
- viii. It would be a long list to include all the involvements for which Dr. Libby was recognized in these letters. The following three highlight her willingness to lead and share her knowledge. As a member of the Tiered Licensure Working Group convened by the MN Board of Behavioral Health and Therapy she helped formulate the scope for educational requirements for master, bachelor, and associate level licenses. She serves as co-host of the Minnesota Coalition of Addiction Educators, and she is a long-standing member of the Unitarian Universalist Addictions and Recovery Ministry Team where she offers “the knowledge and experience that she possesses in a way that is accessible and invitational.”

Lastly, I have her Narrative Discussion addressing the five evaluation criteria in detail, available online at <https://talibby.com/dir/>. My comments in the rest of this review are informed by her narrative and supporting documentation.

Criterion I. Demonstrated Ability to Teach Effectively or Perform Effectively in Other Assignments

Three features of Dr. Libby’s teaching and program leadership stand out: her teaching and teaching philosophy, her creation and leadership of the graduate programs, and her conceptualization of these programs. Each will be briefly presented here, and they are well documented in her oral narrative and accompanying documentation.

Teaching is at the core of Dr. Libby’s professoriate—not merely the delivery of content, although that is part of it, but the teaching-learning dynamic and nurturing the learners ambition

to learn. When Therissa said, “I enjoy teaching,” it should be understood in relation to her statement, “My teaching philosophy is based on engagement.”

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Dr. Libby has wrote or collaborated on the design of all 600-level courses in the Master of Science in Alcohol and Drug Counseling (MS ADC) and the Master of Science in Co-Occurring Disorders Counseling (MS CODC): the course descriptions, learning outcomes, and the syllabi. She knows the curriculum intimately, and these courses are all marked by her attention to the master’s students’ capacity for greater theoretical investigation. Her teaching has evolved toward a “flipped classroom” methodology that puts greater emphasis on student papers, presentations, discussions, and collaborative learning. The students become producers of their own knowledge. Given that students are the center of gravity, it is fitting that Therissa has laid great stress on the evaluation of effectiveness in her teaching. She has sought out peer feedback, looking for affirmation of what is positive and what are areas for growth. She has also taken student feedback seriously, adding her own evaluative questions to the standard IIQs.

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Graduate program development and leadership are central to Dr. Libby’s portfolio. She lead the development of the two graduate programs in her field—first the MS ADC in partnership with Bill Payne which offered its first class in fall 2015, and second the MS CODC under her sole leadership which fielded its first cohort in fall 2107. The latter is becoming the flagship program in the HSER department, which makes sense given the centrality of integrated care as the cutting edge in addiction studies and therapies. As Therissa pointed out in her narrative, program development is an on-going task:

- Application and admissions
- Program policies and procedures
- New student orientations
- Catalog and website materials
- Program evaluation process
- Alignment with national standards
- Program sustainability

Therissa described program direction as entailing broad responsibilities, from recruitment to retention to maintenance. Active direction is always necessary—nothing can be done on auto-pilot—from marketing and recruitment through the application process and review, with individual guidance through the admissions process, then moving the students through orientation and into the program, providing on-going support for students who run into difficulties.

Dr. Libby’s *conceptualization of these graduate programs* is highly commendable, demonstrating a deep understanding of the field of addictions counseling as well as a keen and critical social awareness. She locates the foundation of the graduate programs in the therapeutic

¹ This is an excellent example of the *constructive theory* of knowledge.

relationship—nurturing the traits and skills that foster therapeutic effectiveness. The key components of this relationship are threefold:

- Built on evidence for effectiveness, including awareness of limitations of research literature;
- Characterized by a culturally responsive and anti-oppressive practice;
- Marked throughout by ethical excellence—with students prepared to grapple with ethical dilemmas and strive for excellence.

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Competence lies in integrated care.

Criterion II. Demonstrated Ability to Perform Scholarly or Creative Achievement or Research

Dr. Libby places high value on scholarly and creative activity, which she sees as central to her work as a faculty member. She sees this value in student engagement, in faculty development, and in contributions to the larger community. Her scholarly and creative activities can be summarized in three parts: her Recovery Narratives Project, the conference on Understanding and Responding to Mass Incarceration, and scholarly and professional presentations.

The *Recovery Narratives Project* “is an inquiry into the lived experience of people in recovery from substance use and/or mental health disorders and/or their family effects.” Therissa has had a long-standing interest in the nature of recovery from addiction and the process of recovery. She pointed out that neither recovery nor the process leading to and sustaining it are well understood, and her research is directed to shed light on this gap in knowledge.² She has collected 34 interviews which are now being transcribed. These semi-structured interviews will be taken through qualitative analysis, with outlets in academic and professional publication and student projects. The stories are also being preserved and made available as podcasts. It is not surprising that this project earned Therissa a well-deserved Community-Engaged Scholarship Award.

Understanding and Responding to Mass Incarceration grew out of a book group reading of Michelle Alexander’s *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*. With the leadership of Therissa and Dr. Sethuraju, this reading led to a half-day conference. Four years later (2017), the fourth conference under this title drew 300 participants to a full day of large and small group sessions. From the beginning, it was Therissa’s aim that students understand mass incarceration and consider becoming active in dismantling it. The entire project—from planning through implementation—is an on-going co-creation with a broad array of partners—students, community, faculty, and the university.

Scholarly and professional presentations have been a major outlet for Dr. Libby’s research and related work. She has been an active presenter at conferences, most regularly at annual meetings of NAADAC, the Association

² In a recent conversation with the owner and CEO of well-known residential treatment center in the State of Washington, he made exactly this point: there are very few outcome studies on successful treatment and no one knows what components are necessary to sustain recovery.

for Addiction Professionals (formerly National Association for Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Counselors, thus NAADAC), the International Coalition for Addition Studies Education (INCASE), and the Minnesota Association of Resources for Recovery and Chemical Health (MARRCH). She has often been an invited presenter or facilitator, as when she facilitated a panel of instructors on teaching in the age of integrated care.

Of particular note was her invited presentation as part of the Rutgers University Summer School of Addiction Studies (SSAS), a prestigious 75-year institute. “To be asked to be on the faculty was a signal honor,” she noted in her oral narrative. She taught a 10-hour short course over five days, entitled, “Mindfulness-Based Interventions in Addiction Treatment and Recovery Support.” She was also asked to give a lecture to the full body of institute participants, entitled, “Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention.” She has given numerous other invited presentations to local therapeutic organizations and staffs.

Criterion III. Evidence of Continuing Preparation and Study

Dr. Libby’s professional development activities can be summarized under three headings: participation in University development opportunities, participation in professional conferences and activities, and professional trainings. All have fed directly into course preparations and the quality of instruction. Growing in terms of pedagogy and keeping up with her particular field.

Therissa expressed appreciation for the programs sponsored by the Center for Faculty Development and participated in many of them. She has found the conferences very useful, especially Race Matters and the faculty learning circle on community-engaged scholarship.

Three professional association have been especially important in her on-going professional development.

- NAADAC: The Association for Addiction Professionals. Therissa is president of the state chapter and therefore on the national board of directors. This provides a great avenue for staying current on treatment modalities, what is going on in drug research, changes in payer systems, and other aspects of the treatment field. She is able to bring that information back to the classroom for the benefit of students, as well as inform her own scholarship.
- International Coalition for Addiction Studies Education (INCASE), which not only informs through conferences but also its listserv which provides teaching resources, innovations in the field, pedagogical practices, and more.
- Association for Contemplative Mind in Higher Education (ACMHE) was founded to recover and develop the contemplative dimensions of learning, teaching, and knowing. As was evident in the preceding section of this review (Criterion II), this has become an important line of research and practice for Therissa.

Other conferences on behavioral health, substance use, prevention have been useful, as well. Therissa also noted that she reserves some of her professional development resources for conferences addressing racism and exclusion which are critically important to address.

Two trainings have been especially helpful: The Teaching Online Institute (2014 and 2017) which has enabled Therissa to become more effective teaching in that environment, and Mindfulness-Based Relapse Prevention (2014) which has enabled her to deliver these prevention practices to others—and contributes to scholarly work as well.

Criterion IV. Contributions to Student Growth and Development

Dr. Libby's support for student growth and development has focused on student advising and on advising the student organization. She has taken an active role in both.

Therissa carries a full load of advisees, both undergraduate and graduate. She has a scheduled meeting with every advisee once a year, in addition to meeting them after classes or in her office. She is willing to meet them online, as well, but "they seem to want the face to face contact." This can happen before or after classes, online, in office, or in hallways. What is critically important, in her words, is to connect with students in a way that says, "you matter, we hear you, we see you."

Individual advising has two dimensions, in Therissa's view. The small picture involves questions about registration, plan of study, or completing all forms correctly. The bigger picture addresses questions regarding where this student is going in life and career, what his/her goals are, and how can she (Therissa) help them achieve these goals. The essential skills are warmth, respect for autonomy, formative feedback, and active listening. Overall, she aims to support them in reaching toward their goals and maintaining life balance.

Dr. Libby's second avenue for advising has been student organization advising: she served as advisor of the ADC student organization for three years. She worked to support them in their efforts, especially mentoring them in their leadership. She is very appreciative of receiving the outstanding student organization advisor award (2015), for which they nominated her.

Therissa has brought several valuable enhancements to this student organization—which was already a strong organization before she arrived. First, she has been able to increase the effectiveness of networking with professionals in the field, often through sponsoring their participation in the statewide MARRCH conference. Second, she initiated the Recovery Advocacy Seminar to directly engage students in working for legislative change. Third, she introduced new directions in programming, e.g., NARCAN seminar which was attended by 85 people and equipped them—if they chose—with kits to intervene in opioid overdoses. Fourth, she is particularly proud of the organization's leading role in the URMI event.

Overall, the ADC Student Association has accomplished outstanding work and won awards of recognition for it. Of particular note was the awarding of the Emerging Leaders Award from NAADAC with national recognition at conference in Washington, DC.

Criterion V. Service to the University and Community

Dr. Libby introduced this section of her application with the observation that service is “close to my heart; I see my life and work through a service lens.” As she noted, this was learned at an early age, but it is clear that she has made it her own with a theory, of sorts, grounding service in her work and life: “All human beings are interdependent, and we honor that interdependence through service.”

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Service to the University has taken various forms. Therissa is beginning her term as chair of the University’s Human Subjects Review Board (HSRB) after serving as a member for a number of years, where she reviewed numerous research proposals and otherwise contributed to this work. She also pointed to the URMI conference as providing a service to the University as a whole in the collaboration across departments and student organizations and administrative offices. She served as the first convener for the CCSPA IFO and took an active role in the IFO Council. Her service on the Anti-Racism Leadership Team has been especially important to her.

Dr. Libby has also been a fully engaged member of the ADC programs and the HSER Department, where she has been active in departmental meetings and has chaired two search committees.

Outside the University, Dr. Libby has served as vice president of NAADAC for two years and is now its President. While serving as vice president, she was on host committee planning and leading the NAADAC national conference in Minneapolis in 2016.

She has also been active with the Board of Behavioral Health and Therapy, for which she worked on the Tiered Licensure Working Group to determine the scopes of practice and educational requirements at each level of licensure.

She has also had a leadership role with the Minnesota Addiction Professionals (MnAP) which represents addictions professionals in MN. She was active in developing and pursuing three strategic priorities:

- *Inclusion* in membership as an explicitly anti-racist organization, with attention to the needs of counselors of color and culture.
- *Advocacy* in the threefold sense of education of the general public, collaboration with state agencies, and legislative advocacy.
- *Service* to addiction professionals in Minnesota, which has meant supporting counselors and students with low-cost or no-cost educational opportunities. An expression of this priority is its work on its first annual conference, entitled, “Working with Refugee and Immigrant Populations.”

Summary and Recommendation

In sum, Dr. Therissa Libby's application for tenure and promotion presents an outstanding case for recommending that she be granted both. Dr. Libby's colleagues in the Human Services Department pointed to exemplary work in all five categories of faculty evaluation, and I fully agree. Her teaching, her research, her professional development, her contributions to student growth and development, and her service to the Department, University, and community are all noteworthy. All display her passion for learning and teaching—for the creative human interaction that is the foundation for knowledge and health.

I am happy to recommend that the University grant tenure to Dr. Therissa Libby and promote her to the rank of associate professor in the College of Community Studies and Public Affairs.

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