

June 28, 2023

TO: Members of the Board of Trustees

FROM: Dr. Radenka Maric *Radenka Maric*

RE: Recommendations for Designation as Board of Trustees Distinguished Professors,
Academic Year 2022-2023

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Board of Trustees accept the recommendation of the Distinguished Professor Review Committee and designate the following faculty members as University of Connecticut Board of Trustees Distinguished Professors: Dr. Douglas Casa (Department of Kinesiology), Dr. Lewis Gordon (Department of Philosophy) and Dr. Bandana Purkayastha (Department of Sociology).

BACKGROUND:

On November 10, 1998, the Board of Trustees voted to establish the title of Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor. This designation is the University's highest academic honor.

Pursuant to the By-Laws of the University of Connecticut, the Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor award is reserved exclusively to recognize faculty who have achieved exceptional distinction in scholarship, teaching, and service while at the University of Connecticut. Faculty chosen must have distinguished themselves in all three of these categories. The designation process occurs annually, as a result of a peer review process.

After careful deliberations, the Review Committee recommended the three individuals named above. I am recommending that the Board of Trustees designate these faculty as its Distinguished Professors.

Dr. Douglas Casa

Dr. Douglas Casa has demonstrated a level of scholarly productivity that has led to an international reputation as one of the world's leading experts in exertional heat illness, hydration, thermal physiology, sport performance monitoring and sport safety, and public policy regarding prevention of sudden death in sport. The work of Dr. Casa has not only added to our fundamental scientific understanding in these areas, but has impacted policy and quality of care changes globally to establish widely-used guidelines and practices that have not only improved performance and made sport safer, but have directly saved thousands of lives. As a scholar, there are 4 main areas in which Dr. Casa has demonstrated and exceeded in many cases, the university standards of scholarly excellence: 1) innovation and impact, 2) collaborations, 3) funding success, and 4) publication and public recognition. UConn's Korey Stringer Institute was formed by Dr. Casa at the specific request of the NFL, Gatorade, and Kelci Stringer, whose husband Korey Stringer died a tragic and preventable death from exertional heatstroke during a football practice with the Minnesota Vikings. Dr. Casa has over 260 referred publications, ~60 non-referred publications (i.e., book reviews, letters to the editor, commentaries, roundtables, published conference proceedings), 7 books, and hundreds of abstracts and invited presentations (national and international). The innovative and impactful nature of the organization that Dr. Casa has created is unarguable and in many diverse ways, it has a broad-reaching positive ripple effect of scientific, service, and educational influence.

Dr. Casa has been Director of Athletic Training Education for 20 years and in that role oversees the entire athletic training education program and mentorship of athletic training master's and doctoral students. In both his individual teaching and role in educational leadership/administration he has improved teaching at University of Connecticut in multiple ways. Dr. Casa has individually taught 24 courses in exercise science and athletic training. His contributions to undergraduate and graduate education have been important in establishing core competencies among individual students and enhancing the overall education quality. For the athletic training program alone, Dr. Casa developed 14 new classes and drove the change in the athletic training curriculum that resulted in successful accreditation by multiple athletic training professional organizations. His continued success as a teacher is demonstrated by the quality of his SET feedback each semester and the uniqueness of the course offerings at UConn thanks to his expertise and creativity in teaching.

Dr. Lewis Gordon

Dr. Lewis Gordon is one of the most important and highly regarded intellectuals in the world writing on anti-racism and Africana philosophy. He is internationally recognized as the leading contributor to the fields of Black existentialism, Africana Existential Phenomenology, Fanon, Teleological Studies of Disciplinarity (a field he invented), Decolonialism, and Afro-Jewish Studies. His original theories have generated widely discussed concepts such as “bad faith embodiment,” “epistemic closure,” “disciplinary decadence,” and “shifting the geography of reason”, among many others.

Dr. Gordon is the author of 12 books, editor and co-editor of 6 anthologies, and the author of over 92 articles in academic journals, 74 book chapters, and over 30 introductions and afterwards. His work has been translated into over two dozen languages. His seminal first book, *Bad Faith and Anti-Black Racism* is widely regarded as a classic in the study of existential philosophy and racism, while his recent *Fear of Black Consciousness* has been hailed by Judith Butler as expanding our understanding of “how race consciousness is made and lived.” The latter has received coverage and press in dozens of newspapers and radio media across the globe, including in *Publishers Weekly*. Considered together, Gordon’s works constitute a significant and original vision of the human condition and consciousness.

As a teacher, Dr. Gordon is a recognized innovator and leader—internationally and at UConn—in the movement to make philosophy and the humanities a more inclusive subject. Dr. Gordon’s courses integrate sources from ancient through contemporary Africa, Latin America, and Native America. This has attracted a diverse group of African and Latin American students to philosophy—especially at UConn. Thus, for example, at the undergraduate level, his introductory course, Phil 1106, started with 35 students in his first semester teaching it in 2014; it has since grown into a highly sought-over 370-student lecture course. Moreover, Gordon has designed a number of new courses for the philosophy department’s curriculum, including seminars on Africana Philosophy, Global Southern Phenomenologies, Global Existentialism, Race in the Formation of Human Science, Phenomenology, Philosophy of Psychoanalysis, and Philosophy of Social Science.

Beyond his extensive service to the University, Dr. Gordon is on the editorial board of many journals, book series, and a news outlet (one of which won the 2021 Izzy Award for Independent Media). His work as an institution-builder includes founding *Radical Philosophy Review*, for which he was the first executive editor and for which he edited 6 volumes. The 26th volume of that journal is now at press. He co-founded the Caribbean Philosophical Association in 2003, for which he was the first president. He founded Temple University’s Center for Afro-Jewish Studies, and its Institute for the Study of Race and Social Thought; and at Brown University, he founded the Department of Africana Studies, for which he was the first chairperson. He serves as an evaluator for the MacArthur, Ford, Newcombe, South African Research Council, and ACLS fellowships.

Dr. Bandana Purkayastha

Dr. Purkayastha's research focuses on the structures of inequalities and social transformation, with specific focus on migrants and migration, gender and intersectionality from a global perspective, and critical human rights. A prolific scholar, with a current tally of 15 books, 36 peer reviewed articles, 35 chapters, and many other publications that reach across the world. Eagerness to engage with her ideas are evident through her long list of invited talks in the US and across the world, as well as the invitations to share her expertise for policy purposes by WHO (on migrant women and health) and diverse United Nations (UN) offices (including on violence against women and forced migration). A brilliant sociologist, she has been at the forefront of challenging global conceptual and methodological hierarchies, including between the Global North and South, that act as barriers to robust and meaningful social science research.

Significant disciplinary accolades as well as international recognition of her expertise are testimonies to her national and global scholarly prominence. She received the 2017 Contributions to the Field (career) award from the Asia and Asian American research section of American Sociological Association (ASA) for her transformative work on Asian-origin, highly-skilled migrants (women and men) and their children, as well as low-wage migrant workers. She continues to publish on racism and gendering structures that affect migrants. Her recent work on trafficking and other victims of forced migration, and her theoretical perspective on voluntary and forced migration, was featured by UN-IOM in 2022.

Dr. Purkayastha's teaching record reflects her commitment to international, interdisciplinary, teaching and mentoring. Her commitment is to engage students in an intellectual feast while making sure they are well supported to grow as people who are mindful of equity and justice, and the inherent humanity of others. During her time at UConn she has developed and taught seven graduate and undergraduate courses, and co-developed three others to fill department needs. These courses all meet diversity, international, and interdisciplinary initiatives of the university. Her courses are cross-listed with, or serve the requirements of Asia and Asian American Studies (AASI), Human Rights, India Studies, and Women's Gender and Sexuality Studies. She has been a champion of using multiple methods for teaching and a consistent and enthusiastic early adopter of new technologies. Over the years she has used her national and global networks to bring outstanding scholars and prominent leaders to the university to enrich UConn's educational offerings.