

May 24-25, 2012

**ITEM 155-1006-R0512**

**Authorization to Confer the Title of Professor Emeritus of Communication Disorders upon Richard Boehmler; The University of Montana–Missoula**

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**THAT**

Upon the occasion of the retirement of Professor Richard Boehmler from The University of Montana, the faculty wishes to express its deep appreciation for his years of devoted and valued service to the Department of Communicative Sciences and Disorders, the RiteCare Speech, Language, and Hearing Clinic, the Phyllis J. Washington College of Education and Human Sciences, the University, and the State of Montana by recommending that the rank of Professor Emeritus be conferred upon him by the Board of Regents of the Montana University System.

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**EXPLANATION**

Professor Boehmler retired from The University of Montana upon the closure of the Communication Sciences and Disorders department in 1989. Dr. Boehmler earned his Ph.D. in 1953 from the University of Iowa where he studied under Wendell Johnson, one of the fathers of the profession. Dr. Boehmler, along with his colleague, Charles Parker, Ph.D., established the original department of Communication Sciences and Disorders (CSD) at The University of Montana in 1958. Prior to that, there were only five speech-language pathologists practicing in the State of Montana. Dr. Boehmler quickly identified several organizations whose missions would benefit from the expertise of speech-language pathologists and/or audiologists, including the MT Easter Seals Association, the Council of Exceptional Children, the MT Cleft Palate Association, and the MT Rehabilitation Association. Through his involvement not only as an active member, but also as president or an officer on the executive boards of these organizations, Dr. Boehmler effectively introduced and helped establish the professions of speech language pathology and audiology in the State of Montana.

Under Dr. Boehmler's guidance, the CSD department became one of the first Master of the Arts-level programs in the nation to be both academically accredited and clinically certified by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) in both speech-language pathology and audiology, at a time when nearly all programs with this level of accreditation were Doctor of Philosophy-granting universities. During his tenure, Dr. Boehmler served at times as chair and as clinical director of the CSD department. Because of Dr. Boehmler's efforts, the UM CSD department gained respect at the national level, which in turn drew nationally renowned professionals in the field of speech-language pathology to teach summer courses at UM and to present at the Montana Speech-Language-Hearing Association (MSHA) state conventions.

In addition to his tremendous contribution to the University, Dr. Boehmler was also instrumental in establishing high professional state standards for the field of speech-language pathology and audiology. He served twice as MSHA president and was elemental in ASHA's recognition of MSHA in the 1960s, a time when most other state organizations did not receive ASHA's recognition. Dr. Boehmler served MSHA as an ASHA legislative councilor for 16 years. It was through his professional contributions to the growth and development of ASHA and to the treatment of fluency disorders that he was awarded with the honor of "ASHA Fellow." It was through Dr. Boehmler's dedication to establishment of high state standards in the field through his work with MSHA that laid the groundwork for the maintenance of those standards after

the closure of the CSD department in the late 1980s.

Another lasting legacy from Dr. Boehmler is the Montana State License to practice speech and language pathology or audiology. He drafted the bill which was introduced and passed through the Montana State Legislature in the early 1970s. Dr. Boehmler's work made Montana one of the earliest states to embrace licensure at a level accredited by ASHA. In 2004, during his 54th year as a speech-language pathologist, Dr. Boehmler served on the Montana Speech, Language, and Hearing Association committee which reviewed and made revisions of that same licensure law for speech-language pathologists and audiologists.

Throughout the last five and half decades, Dr. Boehmler has also greatly contributed to standards set by the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI), and thus has influenced services to thousands of children with speech and language impairments. He has served as an expert consultant to public schools statewide on issues related to serving children with fluency disorders. In the early 1970s, a time when licensure for school-based speech-language pathologists was exempt in most states, Dr. Boehmler led the Montana OPI to set the state standard for speech-language pathologists in the schools at a M.A. degree level, bringing it into alignment with ASHA certification standards. Dr. Boehmler also played an instrumental role in the development of criteria for the identification of children as speech and language impaired. Through his contributions, the draft created and adopted into state administrative rule in 1993 was so well crafted that few changes have been required to its content since that time.

As a widely respected authority on stuttering, Dr. Boehmler was selected by Charles Van Riper, Ph.D. in 1971 to contribute to a research project of top fluency intervention methods at Northern Michigan University. As one of the three master clinicians in the study, Dr. Boehmler was videotaped for detailed study of his therapeutic techniques with fluency disorders. For decades Dr. Boehmler provided professional development and training on a statewide and national level which heightened consumer awareness of fluency disorders, as well as improved the delivery and quality of services to individuals with fluency disorders. Dr. Boehmler's commitment to excellence in clinical practice continues to this day through his ongoing development of his model for understanding fluency disorders and through the refinements he continues to make in his intervention methods as a clinician, and a mentor of other clinicians.

With the re-opening of the department of Communicative Sciences and Disorders, the faculty of this department is honored by the many contributions made by Dr. Boehmler at the University, state, and national levels. It for this reason that we submit Dr. Richard Boehmler's name for consideration as Professor Emeritus.

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## ATTACHMENTS