Holistic review wrap-up for: **Mike Smith**
Conducted by: **Gwyneth Connell**
Date: **5/28/24**

Strengths:

- Simply an expert teacher – one of our very best curriculum designers and classroom instructors
- Clear and intentional in providing feedback to students and colleagues
- Flexible in helping to meet the needs to the school – weekend activities, dorm assignment, driving duty for spring athletic season

Areas for growth:

- Navigating challenges of being in a girls' dorm (if you are again next year)
- Self-awareness / tact in written communications to colleagues

Questions:

- Girls' dorm is not ideal assignment – what are your hopes for next year?
- When people say you're intimidating, is that a you problem or a them problem?
- Are you excited about the new class you'll be teaching? What problems will be solved for you by not teaching sophomore humanities?

Takeaways & Thoughts:

Mike, thank you for our wide-ranging and frank conversation. As I said at the outset, the headline should be that you're one of the best classroom teachers and curriculum designers we have, and your students are lucky to have you. Your commitment to each aspect of your work is evident, and I appreciate your openness in discussing both the roses and the thorns.

Teaching:

Your advanced senior class is one of the most interesting courses the department offers, and I appreciate that you are taking the lead on the kind of travel experience we consider to be "gold standard ExEd." That said, your feelings of stagnation within the sophomore humanities program and frustration with the lack of focus on curriculum are understandable and important concerns. The shift to a new advanced survey course, while not exciting for you, offers a fresh start. Your recognition of the need for change and willingness to take on new challenges, despite your frustrations, demonstrates your resilience and dedication.

Res Life:

You've experienced a range of dorm environments, moving through five different dorms in six years. It's understandable that such frequent changes have impacted your comfort and ability to settle in. Your candid admission about struggling with late nights and feeling like a "grumpy old man" reflects a challenging reality of boarding school life, and I appreciate you naming it. Being part of the library rotation could be a beneficial change, should an opening in that group become available. In the meantime, you mentioned feeling more at ease in a smaller boys' dorm, and I can see how this setting might be better aligned with your strengths.

Personal Reflection and Professional Growth:
You acknowledged your reputation for being direct and holding high standards, which you see as integral to who you are. I especially appreciated your note that those high standards extend to both your students and your administrators, and I agree that you shouldn't need to apologize for holding us accountable. Where you might consider balancing this with softer edges is in interactions with department colleagues, who may experience you as intimidating.

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Thank you so much, Mike, for your honesty and the thoughtful insights you shared. Your desire for clarity in your expanding role and the need for guardrails is understandable, given the increasing scope of your responsibilities. Even though I can't totally predict the future, I'm committed to navigating that alongside you and looking out for your best interests as well as the school's. Your vision for what Pomfret could be is evident, and even as we come up against challenges and frustrations along the way, please know that we are a better school because of that vision.

Agreed upon goals:

- Meeting in late summer / early fall with deans, DoF to talk through options for evening responsibility
- Revisions to P:P Celebration of Learning based on feedback
- Summer curriculum work on new survey course