Resolution on the Retirement of
Charles Dietrick, Department of Romance Languages

Dr. Charles Dietrick began teaching in the Romance Languages Department in 1979. He began as many other language instructors in this department; he was a part-timer who divided his time between Tufts and UMass Boston. He was a quiet, competent person, with a background in both German and Spanish, and we had no idea then what a contribution he would ultimately make to our department. He taught very competently in the department through the 80s and 90s, and, when the language coordinator, Marta Rosso-O’Laughlin, took a leave of absence in 1989 and again in 1998, it was Charles who was chosen to step in and take her place to coordinate all six levels of the Spanish language program. When Charles stepped into the role of coordinator in 1989, it was the first time his administrative and personnel management skills were put to the test here at Tufts. He showed us another skill set when he took on the mammoth task of teaching the part-time instructors the necessary skills to function in the computer age; he was also the go-to-person for any troubleshooting regarding computers and software as well as aiding in the department website and other digital issues.

In 2003 he took yet another step forward. Charles was chosen to be the Course Administrator for the intermediate level becoming a permanent, full-time member of the faculty. His duties were to coordinate multiple sections of Intermediate Spanish I and II and work with 10-12 part-time instructors. What was most noticeable about him was his air of quiet confidence. He had something of the air of a sea captain about him, standing at the helm and steering his ship forward. Charles devoted himself to our department and built a very strong and challenging intermediate program for our students. A testament of this is the numerous learning aids, glossaries, and activities he has assembled for our students use on the website. Throughout all these years students have flocked to him, and have received help and guidance from Charles.

Beyond the university he developed skills in conflict resolution, which he applied to different entities in the Boston area where he acted as a consultant or volunteer his time. He has consulted for businesses, especially those with minority and personnel issues. Charles has taken part in legislative actions with the ACLU and the Mass Coalition for the Homeless. He went to Honduras with Habitat for Humanity to build houses, and volunteered to help Salvadoran political refugees, Hispanics with addiction issues, and cancer patients. In the 80s he had an important job at the Hispanic Outreach Project. His work there was that of a counselor, an advocate, and a teacher.

Counselor, advocate and teacher. This is a special person, and he has shared with us at Tufts his full range of talents. It is rare to find someone like Charles, a scholar with a PhD in Spanish American literature and Comparative literature, who has looked at his university and his community and must have asked himself: How can I help these people? What do they need the most? Each of the steps in Charles’s life has been taken in the direction of helping others. Even his foundational work on the integration of digital information into our teaching and administration here in the department was taken on because it was the thing that was most needed. When you step back and consider his many contributions to the community at large and his devotion to this department, the thread running through it all is an abiding concern for the community and all its members. Charles is a quiet leader, a steady helper, a person whom we have trusted and who has always delivered. Tufts is only right in granting him the high honor of professor emeritus, but in doing so, Tufts also shows some self-interest. If you have a Charles Dietrick among you, the last thing you want is for him to leave! So, this award, this high honor, is actually that we are simply acknowledging what is already true, that Charles has a permanent
place here, not only on our faculty, but in our hearts. We are greatly appreciative of the many things he has done for us and for the many years of devoted service.