The nomination of Marcel Cornis-Pope for the CHS Elske V.P. Smith Distinguished Lecturer Award, submitted by members of the faculty of the Department of English:

We can think of no one whose record of scholarship, service, and teaching more deserves to be designated as “outstanding” than Marcel Cornis-Pope. His recent volume *New Hybrids in the Age of Multimedia Expression: Crossing Borders, Crossing Genres* (John Benjamins, 2014) is a major international undertaking which will bring attention to the Department, the College, and the University. This volume comes on the heels of the enormously ambitious and successful four-volume co-edited *History of the Literary Cultures of East Central Europe* (John Benjamins, 2004 – 2010). Since 2013 Professor Cornis-Pope has been President of the Coordinating Publication Committee of the International Comparative Literature Association and from 1991-1998 he served as editor of *Comparatist, journal of the Southern Comparatist Literature Association*.

Professor Cornis-Pope and his wife came to the United States in 1980 to work at University of Northern Iowa as a senior Fulbright lecturer. He left behind a personal library of books in several languages and his students and colleagues at the Timisoara University where he and his wife had been teaching English literature and language for more than a decade. They were also forced to leave behind their young children who were kept as hostages by the communist regime. One year later, they filed for political asylum, managed to reunite their family, and Professor Cornis-Pope started the complex project of reinventing his career as a teacher and writer in the US. In Romania his publications won two national awards but had to face continuous political pressures and censorship. By contrast, the three decades spent at VCU have witnessed an outpouring of academic production from Professor Cornis-Pope in his roles as an author, editor of an award-winning journal, co-editor of a multi-volume transnational literary history, chair of the English department and the inaugural director of VCU’s interdisciplinary Ph.D. in Media, Art, and Text (MATX).

Most of Professor Cornis-Pope’s research is in modern and contemporary literatures – American, British, and Central European, as well as in critical theory. Most of his teaching is in critical theory and narrative studies. His recent work has been focused on a multi-volume project in comparative literature involving East-Central European literatures. East-Central Europe is defined very broadly as the area between the former empires (Hapsburg, Ottoman, Czarist), i.e., the Baltic countries, the Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, Hungary, the Balkan countries, the Czech Republic, and Bohemia. His other important research interest focuses on multimedia texts, going back to some of the original synergies between image and text such as late eighteenth-century romantics like William Blake and moving forward to late nineteenth-century text-image hybrids (William Morris, Oscar Wilde) and the experiments of the avant-garde, followed by recent developments in hypertext and multimedia experiments.

Professor Cornis-Pope has studied narrative in its generic, transcultural, and innovative manifestations, but has also translated major novels and short fiction by Ken Kesey (his

As a result of these initial books, Professor Cornis-Pope became interested in literary exchanges in larger geocultural areas. In 2010, he completed with John Neubauer the editing of a four-volume History of the Literary Cultures of East Central Europe: Junctures and Disjunctures in the 19th and 20th Centuries, which explores East Central European literatures from a comparative-intercultural perspective. Begun in 2004, this four-volume, 2400-page history is the culmination of a tremendous amount of research and selection into the long list of literary institutions profiled by Professor Cornis-Pope and his contributors. Writing in the journal Literary Research, Ileana Orlich describes the work as: “Piled high and deep to include ‘not so much shared institutions’ but rather ‘such region-wide analogous institutional processes as the national awakening, the modernist opening, and the communist regimentation, the canonization of texts, and censorship of literature’ (xi) . . . At a time when the European Union appears ready to forfeit the region’s cultural diversity, the publication of [Volume III] The Making and Remaking of Literary Institutions is a particularly welcome and intellectually enriching work that brings into prominence the national awakening and institutionalization of literature that have taken place over the past two centuries in the cultures of the region.” This monumental work has been reviewed widely and favorably in publications such as World Literature Studies, Comparative Critical Studies, Literary Research/Recherche Litteraire, Akzent, Rampike, and the Yearbook of Comparative Critical Studies.

Professor Cornis-Pope’s most recent project is an international collection of essays on Literature and the New Media, published in 2014 under the title New Literary Hybrids in the Age of Multimedia Expression. In addition to editing this collection, Professor Cornis-Pope wrote the general introduction and three of the volume’s body chapters. New Literary Hybrids in the Age of Multimedia Expression recognizes the global shift toward the visual and the virtual in all areas of textuality as the printed, verbal text is increasingly joined with the visual, often electronic, text. This shift has opened up new domains of human achievement in art and culture, unimaginable a generation or two ago. Drawing on recent theoretical and applied work in the field of electronic and multimedia literature, the international roster of contributors to this volume pursue a broad range of issues under five sets of questions that allow a larger conversation to emerge, both inside the volume’s sections and between them. These four sections cover: 1) Multimedia Productions in Theoretical and Historical Perspective; 2) Regional and Intercultural Projects; 3) Forms and Genres; and, 4) Readers and Rewriters in Multimedia Environments. Early reviews have described this work as having “the
courage to open the research to lesser known linguistic and cultural traditions” exemplified by, “a broad-minded approach to the necessary relationships between literature in particular and media, technology and culture in general.

In response to the quality and quantity of his international publications, in 2012 Professor Cornis-Pope was elected as a member of the Academia Europaea, a major international research institution that brings together some of the best scholars in the Humanities and Social Sciences. As president of the Coordinating Committee of International Comparatist Literature Association (ICLA) he has reviewed and approved for publication a number of important contributions to Comparatist studies including the first volume of A Comparative History of Nordic Cultures edited by Steven P. Sondrup and Mark B. Sandberg; the second volume of A Comparative History of Literatures in the Iberian Peninsula, edited by César Domínguez Prieto, Anxo Abuín, and Ellen Sapega; and a project on Migration and Literature in Europe in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century developed by Fridrun Rinner and Franca Sinopoli.

Given the high respect with which he is held by his colleagues, it is unsurprising that Professor Cornis-Pope was elected to serve as Chair of the VCU English Department from 2000-2006. As chair he was able to expand the exchanges between departments on and off-campus, particularly through his role as inaugural director of the new interdisciplinary Ph.D. program in Media, Art, and Text, a collaboration between the English Department, the Richard T. Robertson School of Media and Culture, and the School of the Arts. In recognition of his role in conceptualizing and launching this program, in September of 2014 VCU launched the “Cornis-Pope Lecture Series in Media, Art, and Text.”

For the past twenty-four years, Professor Cornis-Pope has set the highest of bars for intellectual rigor, academic productivity, and, not the least of all, collegiality, within the English Department, the College of Humanities and Sciences, and the larger VCU and international communities. In light of his many accomplishments, we ask for his serious consideration as the recipient of the 2015 VCU College of Humanities and Sciences Elske V.P. Smith Distinguished Lecturer award.