

June 14, 2014

Letter of Support for Patty Cownie: Sages over 70

I am more than delighted to write in support of Patty Cownie's candidacy for Sages over 70. I have known Patty as a friend and neighbor for 15 years, and as a member of the Drake University Board of Trustees for the past 10 years.

I know that there is no need for me to elaborate on all of the many ways in which Patty has contributed to the health and vitality of our community—I'm sure that her nominator and other letters of support will do that, and I'm equally sure that you all know of her extensive activities and the leadership role that she has played in Des Moines.

I would like to emphasize the vital role that Patty has played as a member of Drake's Board of Trustees. Drake's Board is an active board that takes its governance responsibilities very seriously, and that is consistently engaged in managing the University's present and shaping its future. From the perspective of the president, I could not ask for a better group, and I know from talking to my colleagues around the country that it's unusual, and that I'm very fortunate.

In this context, Patty—from the very start of her tenure—has been an important voice in Board discourse, both in her service on a variety of Board committees and in meetings of the full Board. Her views on important issues are not only greatly valued by her colleagues, and by me, but are actively solicited because of what she adds to our thinking. Patty also has the wonderful ability to ask penetrating questions that open whole new lines of thinking and possibilities, and that challenge the fundamental assumptions about the ways in which we do things (which is what higher education institutions desperately need their boards to do...). She has also been willing to step up her level of engagement by chairing Board committees, providing thoughtful and focused leadership.

At the same time, Patty and Jim have been incredibly generous in their financial support of Drake, recognizing the University's vital importance to our community, and to the thousands of graduates whom we send out around the country. Their support has been equally thoughtful, responding to what they know are the real needs of the institution, ranging from scholarship support to funds for faculty salaries to athletics operations and the new basketball practice facilities.

To name someone a “sage” communicates that the person is wise and knowledgeable—Patty’s generous service to Drake University has been wise, knowledgeable, supportive and encouraging. I enthusiastically support her nomination!

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Maxwell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and a stylized "M" at the end.

David Maxwell

