THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Regents Communication

ACTION REQUEST

Subject: **Report of Faculty Retirement**

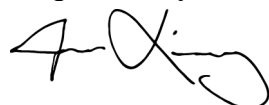**Action Requested:**   **Adoption of Retirement Memoir**

William H. Baxter, Ph.D., professor of Chinese language and literature and professor of Chinese linguistics in the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts, retired from active faculty status on May 31, 2024.

Professor Baxter received his B.A. degree *summa cum laude* (1970) from Amherst College, and his M.A. (1974) and Ph.D. (1977) degrees from Cornell University. He was an assistant professor in the Department of English at the University of Alabama in Birmingham from 1978-83. Professor Baxter joined the University of Michigan faculty as an assistant professor in 1983, and was promoted to associate professor in 1990, and professor in 2013.

Professor Baxter specializes in historical linguistics. His pioneering book, *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology* (De Gruyter Mouton, 1992), presents a reconstruction of the pronunciation of Old Chinese (the language of the earliest Chinese literary texts). He is a leading figure in the reconstruction of historical Chinese phonology and in determining the path from older forms of Chinese to their modern descendants. His book *Old Chinese: A new reconstruction* (Baxter, William H., and Laurent Sagart. 2014, Oxford University Press), reaffirmed his position as a leading historical linguist of Old Chinese in North America. This book, which received the prestigious Leonard Bloomfield Book Award (2016) from the Linguistic Society of America, is the product of eight years of collaboration: a linguistic reconstruction of the Chinese language of about 1000 BCE, drawing upon previously underutilized evidence, including modern Chinese dialects, early Chinese loanwords in other languages, and new documents recovered from archeological sites. His recent publications deal with the history of Chinese dialects, linguistic approaches to early Chinese literature, and historical linguistics methodology. Professor Baxter has also played a key role in integrating Chinese historical linguistics into the curricula of the Department of Asian Languages and Cultures and the Department of Linguistics, including the courses Deciphering Ancient Languages, Asian Travelers, Languages of Asia, Language and History, How Different is Chinese?, and Sinological Tools and Methods.

The Regents now salute this distinguished faculty member by naming **William H. Baxter, professor emeritus of Chinese language and literature and professor emeritus of Chinese linguistics**.

Requested by:

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Jon Kinsey
Vice President and Secretary of the University   **May 2024**