



## **External Reviews**

### **David Anable**

- former managing editor and foreign editor, **Christian Science Monitor**
- former chair, **School of Journalism, Boston University**
- former president, **International Center for Journalists**

### **Dr. James L. Hoyt**

- professor emeritus, **University of Wisconsin, Madison**
- former director, **School of Journalism & Mass Communication, University of Wisconsin, Madison**

### **Bill Kovach**

- former chief, **Washington Bureau, New York Times**
- former editor, **Atlanta Journal-Constitution**
- former curator, **Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University**
- founding chairman, **Committee of Concerned Journalists, a group that now totals more than 9,000 journalists worldwide**

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**David J. Anable**  
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Jeff Fruit, Director and Professor  
School of Journalism and Mass Communication  
204 Franklin Hall, KSU  
Kent, OH 44242

8.20.09

Dear Professor Fruit and Colleagues,

It is my pleasure and privilege to serve as a referee for Karl Idsvoog's tenure review.

I have the greatest respect for Karl's professional accomplishments, his remarkable ability to keep abreast of the fast-evolving and multimedia journalism field, his genuine impact as a teacher and instructor overseas (and, no doubt, in this country, too), and his unbending integrity. This is one fine man, as well as one fine journalist.

As you can see from my resume, attached, I spent many years as a reporter, editor, and professor, as well as academic and non-profit administrator. I would have been proud to have had Karl Idsvoog as one of my Boston University professors. And as President of the International Center for Journalists, I was proud to have him as one of ICFJ's most successful, skillful, fearless, and determined instructors on difficult assignments in the Caucasus and other challenging regions overseas. He has built up an extraordinary record of public service as an international journalism teacher, producing a genuine impact on individual journalists as well as on the countries where he has worked.

A considerable body of research indicates the connection between democratic progress and honest, fair, and professional journalism. It is hard, if not impossible, to have the one without the other. Georgia's "Rose Revolution" of November 2003, that mobilized an amazingly peaceful removal of the country's old Soviet-style gerontocracy, was powered in large part by a newly-trained, determined, and independent media. At the sharp edge of the drive to expose official corruption and incompetence was Georgia's widely viewed TV station, Rustavi 2, and its pivotal 60-Minutes-style investigative program.

Karl was one of the leading trainers of Rustavi 2's journalists and its investigative team. And he has returned to Georgia time after time to drill into reporters, editors, and producers the basics of responsible journalism. He has become something of a fixture in ICFJ's Caucasus School of Journalism, which I was instrumental in launching when ICFJ president, and its offshoot at Yerevan State University. And I wholly agree with the

directors of these programs that Karl is probably their most effective educator – a teacher of “outstanding academic rigor,” as one of them puts it.

Karl has worked overseas for all the significant journalism training organizations – from ICFJ, IREX, and Internews to the U.S. State Department and USAID. He is a no-nonsense instructor and mentor in a world long-accustomed to nonsense instead of news. He has had to produce a revolution in his students’ cultures as well as in their professional concepts and methods. And he clearly succeeded with enough of his students over many months and years to have a notable impact on democratic practices in areas unaccustomed to having their elections actually examined and their officials actually questioned and boldly scrutinized. It is not surprising that his services are in constant demand.

Many journalists and journalism instructors have failed to keep pace with the high-tech revolution convulsing journalism. Karl Idsvoog is absolutely not among them. He thinks and works and teaches on the cutting edge – an incalculable advantage to his students at Kent State University as well as those outside the U.S. It is encouraging to know that KSU is prepared to recognize a journalism teacher of the quality and toughness that distinguish Karl’s contributions to journalism. It is extraordinarily important that journalism schools such as yours focus on precisely the sort of excellence, ethics, and rigor that Karl brings to his teaching and practice of journalism. And I know very few journalists who manage to combine his clarity of reporting with such a strong commitment to honesty and an ability to work across the full spectrum of modern communications and technology.

I also commend Karl’s co-authorship of a book on the crucial art of how to dig out vital information from public records. With the weakening of many daily newspapers’ investigative roles in face of economic cut-backs, and hence their ability to extract the facts from just such public records, “*Access with Attitude*” has the potential to open doors and files to a much wider range of enquirers and investigators – and thereby expose or avoid official corruption.

Honest, tough-minded, intelligent, effective journalists are all too rare, as well as vital to our system of government. KSU has one in Karl Idsvoog. Treasure him!

Yours sincerely,

David Anable

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**August 31, 2009**

**Prof. Jeff Fruit, Director**  
**School of Journalism and Mass Communication**  
**204 Franklin Hall**  
**Kent State University**  
**Kent, OH 44242**

**Dear Prof. Fruit:**

**I am pleased to provide this review of the academic and scholarly activities of Karl Idsvoog. I trust my assessment will be helpful as you evaluate Karl's contributions to your School, as well as to the profession and the academy. As you have requested, I am also attaching a copy of my most recent resume.**

**First, by way of disclosure, I should note that I directed Karl's M.A. program at Wisconsin and that he served as my Teaching Assistant in various broadcast news courses while he was a graduate student here. Since he left Madison in 1975, I have had only periodic contact with Karl. He would occasionally stop for a visit when he was in town and would periodically send copies of his professional work, but my direct contact with him has been minimal in the past 34 years.**

**As a long-time former head of the Broadcast News Sequence at Wisconsin, and as Director of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication from 1981 to 1991, I have evaluated a wide range of broadcast journalism faculty members. In my various accrediting assignments within ACEJMC, I was typically the site visit team member responsible for evaluating the schools' broadcast programs, as well as their administrations. As a result, I am comparing Karl to a broad cohort of broadcast journalism faculty members throughout the country.**

**I have found the materials Karl has prepared and distributed for this review to be most impressive. As a professional journalist and investigative reporter, Karl has been well known for his hard work, thorough research, and overwhelming attention to detail. On top of that, he has been able to organize and structure the information he gathered through his own research, and to tell stories that are fact-based, compelling, interesting, and exceedingly well organized.**

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**It now appears that Karl has successfully transferred all these professional strengths to the classroom. His syllabi and other teaching materials are well structured and the content of his courses is extremely rigorous. It is obvious that Karl not only teaches the skills necessary to be a successful journalist, he also teaches his students about the role of journalists in our society. His students are expected to dig beneath the surface on stories, to not accept formula answers or statements, and to actively seek out information to complete their stories.**

**He clearly understands the way the journalism business has evolved. He is teaching students to be multi-dimensional, even multi-media, in their approaches to covering stories. The examples of student work show that his students have mastered the use of the equipment and are able to use it to tell well-crafted stories. But his courses go well beyond that. His courses include that important additional component – what it MEANS to be a journalist. His students are expected to grapple with ethical issues, issues of accuracy, and issues involving reluctant sources – some who may later deny information they have already provided in interviews.**

**Karl has also thought deeply about what he does – and what journalists do – and has captured much of his professionalism in various writings. The draft chapters of the book on Ohio's public records laws, co-authored with David Marburger, provide a solid, clear, helpful, and enduring manual that will be of utmost value both for practicing professional journalists and for journalism students.**

**I know how difficult it is to find broadcast journalism faculty members who have all the essential professional and academic skills. I have seen dozens of job candidates who possess the coveted Ph.D., but have only minimal professional experience to add to their classes. There are similar numbers of candidates who have multiple years of professional experience and lack a higher degree. Their classes tend to be filled with war stories about the way the professional field functioned back when they were practicing journalists.**

**Karl is a hybrid. He has a record of award-winning investigative journalism at the highest levels in the profession. He brings skill and passion to teaching that constantly challenge his students. But I am most impressed with how he has adapted to the newer media forms and job expectations. He does not just pay lip service to the needs for multi-media journalists. He teaches his students what they need to know and challenges them to be the best they can. He clearly prepares them for the future.**

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**I have carefully reviewed the document you provided, detailing the expectations you have for tenure candidates under the heading of “Scholarship and Service.” It is a well thought out and carefully written document, which I have found to be more useful in a general context than as a specific yardstick to measure performance. I say that because, to me, Karl represents an excellent blending of a number of the criteria. His teaching, his service, and his writing combine impressive professional achievements with the ability to integrate and apply knowledge to develop courses and course materials to that end. He appears to regularly create new content and materials to challenge his students.**

**I’m sure Karl is quite unlike other faculty members in your School. He doesn’t fit any type of traditional journalism faculty member mold. He does not spend a lot of time writing academic or scholarly publications because that’s not what his job is all about. He writes materials and information used to educate and train journalists in Ohio and in many other locations throughout the world.**

**You would not want an entire faculty made up of Karl Idsvoogs. But what he has to offer must fit in with the curriculum of your program, and supplement other courses and faculty. In that way, I can easily see how he is able to successfully lead students to be able to seek and obtain positions in the appropriate professional fields using their skills.**

**To me, there is no question that Karl has flourished both professionally and academically as a member of your faculty. You have been able to provide the resources and opportunities for him to become a solid and respected journalism educator. At the same time, Karl has obviously been able to pursue curriculum areas that are of particular interest to him. And your students are the beneficiaries of this productive synergy.**

**I am pleased to offer this strong positive assessment of Karl and his work. I believe he truly does meet your stated criteria.**

**Sincerely,**

**James L. Hoyt  
Professor Emeritus  
School of Journalism and Mass Communication  
University of Wisconsin, Madison**

Saturday, July 31, 2009

Jeff Fruit  
Director and Professor  
School of Journalism and Mass Communication  
204 Franklin Hall, KSU  
Kent, OH 44242

Subject: Tenure Review Evaluation of Karl Idsvoog

Dear Professor Fruit,

I am pleased to offer my assessment of Karl Idsvoog's fitness to hold a tenured teaching position at Kent State's School of Journalism and Mass Communication. I am aware of the importance of the decision of granting tenure and hope this letter will be of some use in this process.

Although I have never directly worked with Karl I have known him and have been familiar with his work for a little more than two decades. In the last two phases of my career—as curator of the Neiman Journalism Fellowships at Harvard and my work with the Committee of Concerned Journalists and the Project for Excellence in Journalism---it has been an important part of my job to be in touch with and monitoring the people involved in the world of journalism. That work has brought me in touch with Karl and his teaching and thinking time and again. In addition I have had an opportunity over the past few weeks to review samples of his teaching. This assessment is based on that background of knowledge and my own experience teaching journalism and public affairs classes at three universities.

Karl brings into the classroom several crucial attributes. The first is that he has personally mastered the craft of his work, a craft based on clear and precise communication of ideas. Another is his passion for the importance of journalism in a democratic society and the responsibilities inherent in that fact. A third is the strength of character and ethics that have been demonstrated by his work throughout his career as a journalist and as a teacher.

Those characteristics have been on display in the work he has done with other members of your faculty in the Caucasus where the approach to learning by doing has built into its methodology the values that balance the power of the craft the students are mastering with a sense of responsibility. It is impressive as well the way Karl and the other faculty push to instill in the students a sense of critical thinking about their work. Importantly, too, Karl and the others I have seen in action there are preparing your students for what ever technology will demand of them. Economics will determine what technology will distribute the journalism of the future. The only thing journalism education can do is instill critical thinking and the proper values in its students and prepare them to express those values in the content they provide in print, audio or video.

During my years at Harvard I came to realize the one of the most important requirements of a Harvard education, perhaps even the most important, is the requirement that every student take and pass the expository writing class. The ability of Harvard students to express themselves and their thoughts clearly and effectively is, I believe, a key to their future success. My distinct impression after watching Karl and his associates at work with your students is that they have created an approach at Kent that parallels that at Harvard.

Based on what I believe Karl has to offer it is my studied judgment he deserves tenure. Not only does he bring demonstrated ability and knowledge into your classrooms but he brings in the values and ethics I would want my children exposed to and with which I desperately hope the journalists of the future will be instilled.

Sincerely,

Bill Kovach

Att: Personal biography