

September 18, 2026

Dear Dr. Britton and Dr. Lyon, Co-Chairs of the Faculty Senate Academic Affairs Committee:

I am writing in this letter to request that Ms. Carmen Johnson, PhD in Department of Educational Leadership, College of Education be awarded a posthumous degree during the Fall 2026 commencement ceremony.

Ms. Carmen Johnson passed away on July 13, 2026. At that time, Ms. Johnson was a student from the Southeastern Michigan – Wayne County Community College District cohort, enrolled in the PhD program in the Department of Educational Leadership, College of Education.

After conversations with Dr. Royce Ann Collins and hearing Ms. Johnson's story, I concur with their request for a posthumous degree. Given the structure, curriculum, and process of how the degree is delivered, I believe this request meets the criteria of a posthumous degree and one that would honor Ms. Johnson's dedication to her craft, profession, and Kansas State University. Furthermore, I have included letters of support from both Dean Mercer and Dr. Collins that collectively capture the story and context of our humble request. Additionally, Dr. Collins and the program are willing to visit your committee at the time of consideration/discussion to add any additional context or answer any questions.

On behalf of Nelson and Marilyn Galle Dean Debbie Mercer, Dr. Royce Ann Collins, Graduate Program Director and Elvon Skeen Endowed Chair of the Department of Educational Leadership, and the graduate faculty of the College of Education, the Graduate School expresses strong support for conferring a posthumous degree upon Ms. Johnson at the Fall 2026 commencement.

I strongly support Dean Mercer, Dr. Collins', the cohort's and faculty's recommendation and request to award Ms. Johnson a posthumous degree. Ms. Johnson remained in good academic and conduct standing throughout her time at Kansas State University.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration of this request. If you need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.



Phillip D. Payne, PhD

Interim Dean and Professor
Kansas State University Graduate School

Cc: Candance LaBerge
Angela Pfizenmaier
Miranda Schremmer
Scott Schlender