

To: Dean Scott – The College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies
From: John Summers – CSUS Economics Department Graduate, Spring 2006
Date: 1/5/07

It is with great pleasure that I offer this endorsement of Professor David Lang in support of his nomination for the Outstanding Teaching Award. His influence upon my education at CSUS has been great, and extremely significant vis a vis my academic success. I was fortunate to have Professor Lang for several of my undergraduate economics classes, including the then ECON 140 series: Quantitative Analysis, Introduction to Econometrics, and Economic Research Methods. I am grateful to him for his dedication to, and support of, my education, both within and beyond the context of these courses. I hope that I am successful at sharing with you here a bit of the basis for my gratitude. The few examples I present are only some of the many particular circumstances around which that gratitude has developed.

In the classroom, Professor Lang's lectures are well structured and effective. His course plans are well structured, and progress in a logical and orderly fashion. Additionally, his presentation of the course material is usually engaging and often entertaining. An example of this comes from the econometrics class mentioned above. I believe that subjects such as econometrics are often difficult to present in a way that maintains students' interest, but Professor Lang always managed to interject just the right amount of economic context and/or humor to keep us both interested and focused upon the important points being presented.

Though Professor Lang successfully kept the mood of that econometrics class from ever becoming dry or tedious, he did expect a lot from us, and issued assignments which exacted a level of work commensurate with that expectation. That said, he always gave us plenty of lead time around those assignments and he always made sure that the students who were willing to take the initiative with their work were supported in that process.

Professor Lang's abilities are not by any means limited to teaching students majoring in economics. The first course I took from him was 'Economics At The Movies,' which at the time was an upper division elective course available to all majors. In that course Professor Lang did a wonderful job of presenting economic concepts in the context of non-traditional economic settings. Several times I overheard other (non-economics) students in the class saying things like "Oh, I get it;" or, "That makes sense now."

Perhaps the most valuable thing I learned in the movies class was something entirely unrelated to economics. Professor Lang required students to turn in several one page papers, each answering several specific questions. The value in this exercise was that the paper could be no longer than one page. At first this was hard to accomplish. I could have more easily filled three to five pages for each assignment. But by the end of the semester it had become easier to edit my answers down to one concise page and to this day this is a skill I am thankful for having developed.

In the classroom Professor Lang has great control of the room, and has demonstrated remarkable professionalism under difficult circumstances. In the movies class, there was at one point in the semester a problem with plagiarism. It was a large class, and as I've already mentioned, several papers were assigned. This was obviously a very hard situation for Professor Lang personally. I attribute his deep concern to how much he cares about the integrity of the educational process at CSUS. He addressed the class about the problem appropriately and handled this very difficult situation admirably.

Another instance of Professor Lang's professionalism which I will always remember was the midterm examination for Quantitative Analysis, during which an altercation between two of the students occurred. Professor Lang took immediate charge of the situation and handled it, both at the time and subsequently, with appropriate tact and decorum.

Outside the classroom Professor Lang makes himself available to help students well above and beyond any reasonable call of normal duty. The majority of my economics professors at CSUS have been extremely helpful around homework assignments and other projects, and none more so than Professor Lang. An example of this again comes from the econometrics class. I remember one early morning shortly before a major assignment was coming due; it was not normal office hours and Professor Lang was obviously trying to concentrate on a large pile of his own work. His office door was closed (which itself is a rarity), yet he answered my knock and made time to help me with my difficulty. He was obviously very tired and I felt a little bad afterwards for imposing upon him, but I cite this example here because I want to emphasize the fact that in no other department at CSUS have I been afforded the amount of one on one help that I've received from my economics professors, and I have received much of that help from Professor Lang.

In the Spring of 2006 I was fortunate to be the recipient of the economics department's Adam Smith Award for the best undergraduate research paper in the department. My winning paper was my Economics Research Methods term project. Though I worked very hard on this project, much of the credit for how it turned out belongs to Professor Lang. His constant encouragement and numerous suggestions for how to make it better were key components leading to my paper's eventual success. I think I spent nearly as many hours in Professor Lang's office that semester as were spent in the classroom. I even bothered him over the preceding winter recess with rough ideas I had for my project. In every instance Professor Lang was helpful to, and patient with, me. I truly appreciate this.

When I am done with my education here at CSUS, one of the things I hope to do professionally is teach courses in economics principles. When that day comes, I know that I will make use of many of the techniques and methods I was exposed to in Professor Lang's classes. I hope that the few examples I have presented here shed some light upon just how dedicated and special an educator Professor David Lang is. I am now and will always be grateful to him for his dedication and support.

John Summers