

11/25/2006

To: Dean, Otis L. Scott
School of Social Science

From: Sheena Murray
Economics Student

RE: Nomination of Dr. David Lang for the Outstanding Teaching Award

It had always been my intention to write a letter to the CSUS Department of Economics in recognition of Dr. Lang's abilities before leaving the university. However, when I found out about the Award for Outstanding Teaching, it seemed a far more suiting act to nominate him. An award for outstanding teaching is exactly the recognition I feel Dr. Lang deserves for his efforts and skills as a professor.

I have had extensive contact with Dr. Lang, having taken his courses in Economics of Education, Economics at the Movies, Quantitative Economic Analysis and Econometrics. The breadth of the courses I have taken from Dr. Lang have illustrated to me his well rounded ability as a professor. He excels at teaching lecture and discussion oriented courses as well as empirical/mathematical courses. I have also had the opportunity to work with Dr. Lang as his teaching assistant for Intermediate Micro Economics and have benefited greatly from this experience.

As both Dr. Lang's student and his teaching assistant I found his commitment to the profession of teaching easily visible through his commitment to his students. This commitment is evidenced by his responsiveness to questions and inquiries, commentary for improvement given with every grade received and the increased office hours he provides to students. Dr. Lang demands a lot out of his students and challenges them to bring their academic understanding and standard of work to a new level. Despite his exacting standards, Dr. Lang will bend over backwards to ensure his students have the tools available to excel in his courses. Dr. Lang spends a large majority of his free time in his office, where his door is always open. He also has the foresight to seek the help of teaching assistants for his more difficult classes in order to give his students another resource for assistance.

As I am a working student, Dr. Lang's willingness to meet at times outside of his office hours, at times more conducive to my schedule, was a valuable resource to me. The resource Dr. Lang provides to the student body has made a definite impression within the department. When I mentioned writing this letter to many of my fellow students, they instantly chimed in with statements of sentiment, and reverence and eagerly encouraged me to nominate him. Many stated they would be happy to either sign a letter I submitted or were willing to write a letter to attach to my own, if it would be

acceptable. Although, I can not share with you all of their individual stories, I can certainly share with you the impact Dr. Lang has had on my own academic career and life.

When I started college at 16, after leaving high school in order to work full time and support myself, I knew very little about the academic process and not much more a few years later when transferring to CSUS. Dr. Lang took the time to meet with me and help me to understand the process and was an excellent resource for academic advising. More importantly Dr. Lang showed me the potential of what I could do, and the opportunities that were available to me. As someone from a low income household, who had not graduated from high school, and had worked full time to put herself through school I did not feel a graduate degree was a very realistic goal for me. Although I had considered a Masters, as I could stay at a lower costing state school, it was not until Lang took the time to explain to me the differences in financing and the opportunities of fellowships and teaching assistant positions, did I begin to understand a PhD was within my realm of opportunity. The pivotal role Lang played in my decision making process can not be overstated. His reassurance in the quality of my work and his knowledge and time spent helping me to understand the financing options available have made a goal of a PhD in Economics a tangible and realistic objective.

Since deciding to apply to doctorate programs Dr. Lang has been a port in the storm for me. I have found the process of applying to PhD programs very overwhelming, particularly considering I had never taken the SATs, or applied competitively to colleges as many students did before their undergraduate educations. Dr. Lang has gone above and beyond, helping to edit my entrance essays, agreeing to review writing samples, offering advice for the GRE, discussing the differences of schools, and helping with moral support during a very intimidating process for me.

As I peruse a Teaching Assistant position in graduate school and a professorship afterwards, I am sure I will model many of my professional traits off those I have seen in Dr. Lang. Dr. Lang is a confident, knowledgeable and very accessible professor who makes his students feel comfortable approaching him for help both in their academic careers and personal lives. He supportively pushes his students to surpass their own expectations while ensuring that they are provided with every resource necessary to do so. His ability to recognize the potential in his students and to help them to realize it as well is the mark of a truly influential instructor. For these reasons, and so many more, I feel Dr. Lang is the ideal candidate for an Outstanding Teaching Award.

Sincerely,



Sheena L. Murray