

March 5, 2012

To the Committee for the CSUN Distinguished Teaching Award,

It is my honor to support Dr. Jerald Schutte's nomination for the CSUN 2012 Distinguished Teaching Award. During his tenure at CSUN, Dr. Schutte has established a long enduring legacy as an educator. He has made important and innovative contributions to the culture of student learning at departmental, college, and university levels. He has excelled in his classroom and instruction and pedagogic practice, has authored a number of pioneering teaching policies, and has been an important mentor for me personally.

Dr. Schutte is one of the more established members of the Department of Sociology, so as a "newer" faculty member I have never had the opportunity to observe his classroom practice; nor had I, until recently, had the opportunity to review his student evaluations of teaching. However, not long ago Dr. Schutte shared with me a brief history of his student evaluations. I suppose the most relevant comment I can make regarding student reflections on Dr. Schutte's teaching is ... WOW! His evaluations are beyond remarkable, and I must say that I am not just impressed by the degree to which these evaluations reflect an extraordinary teaching acumen but, quite frankly, I am a little surprised. My surprise does not come because I question the teaching integrity or ability of Dr. Schutte (that is far from the case), but more because as a teacher I think he may be one of the best kept secrets in the Department of Sociology ... maybe at the university. In my opinion, Dr. Schutte's excellent teaching record is astonishing, and with great humility he does nothing to publicize it.

When it comes to knowledge of Dr. Schutte's teaching, a different story than my own is told by his students. Simply put, Dr. Schutte's teaching excellence comes as no surprise to them. They know

exactly how good of a teacher he is and they tell us over-and-over, in countless ways, in their evaluations and reflections on his teaching. In the classroom he demonstrates his dedication, concern, and intensity for their education. His students know it, they tell us ... and that is all the publicity he needs.

Dr. Schutte's teaching skills are demonstrated in both his undergraduate and graduate level teaching. As the Sociology Department's Graduate Coordinator for the past eight years, I have a unique perspective on Dr. Schutte's specific contributions to graduate study in Sociology at CSUN, and I'd like to share some of those contributions. Pedagogically, Dr. Schutte has been central to the Sociological Methods Core Courses in the graduate program. He has taught courses in Quantitative Methods and Statistics for our graduate students, and for over a decade he has anchored the graduate-level Research Methodology Comprehensive Examination process in the department. It is no secret that Sociology graduate students at CSUN fear Research Methods and Statistics, and their fear comes purely from the perceived difficulty of the subject matter. Graduate students in Dr. Schutte's courses certainly echo these same fears ... but he has a remarkable ability assuage these anxieties while delivering high content material, on difficult subject matter, in a manner that facilitates student learning, retention, and appreciation of the contents of their studies. It is unusual for most students at any level to appreciate learning statistics!

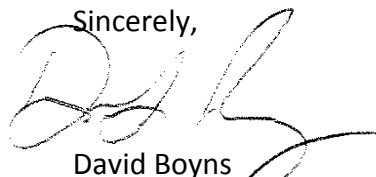
In addition to Dr. Schutte's pedagogic contributions to the CSUN Graduate Program in Sociology, he has also served as an important mentor for a number of our graduate students. Several students in particular come to mind: Dr. Jesse Fletcher, who has recently completed his Ph.D. in Sociology at the University of California, Riverside; Matthew Grindal, who has nearly completed his Ph.D. in Sociology at the University of California, Riverside; Stephanie Kimberling, who recently completed her MA degree (2011) with Dr. Schutte as her primary mentor; Esther Villegas, who will complete her MA degree in Spring 2012, and was recently honored with the CSUN Association of Retired Faculty Memorial Award. I know personally that Dr. Schutte has inspired each of these students in profound ways. In the cases of Jesse, Matthew and Esther this inspiration began when they arrived in his undergraduate classes at CSUN. If there is a story to be told about Dr. Schutte's

teaching and mentorship, these students and their accomplishments are among those best positioned to tell it!

I'd like to conclude this letter with some personal reflections on Dr. Schutte's impact on my own teaching practice. While, I have never been in Dr. Schutte's classroom as either an observer or a student, as a peer reviewer in the RTP process Dr. Schutte has visited my classroom several times. Dr. Schutte approaches the peer-review process with sincerity and I have benefited from his feedback on each of his visits. His comments have always been beneficial, whether they have encouraged me to engage students in the classroom more directly with the course texts, or to make sure I am connecting with the "text messagers" and "Facebookers" in the back of the room, or just to keep honing my strengths. I think in many ways, Dr. Schutte's RTP peer reviews have helped to enhance my own teaching practice, and the educational experiences of the students in my own classes.

Overall, it is my belief that Dr. Jerald Schutte is a truly exceptional candidate for the CSUN 2012 Distinguished Teaching Award and I enthusiastically support his nomination.

Sincerely,



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