

February 28th, 2012

Herman DeBose, Chair
Department of Sociology
California State University, Northridge

Dear Dr. DeBose:

I am writing in support of the nomination of Dr. Jerald Schutte for the CSUN Distinguished Teaching Award. I am currently a doctoral student studying social psychology at University of California, Riverside. Prior to my studies at UCR, I received BA and MA degrees in Sociology from CSUN. During that time, Dr. Schutte played an invaluable role in my academic growth. As both a professor and mentor, I can honestly say that without his influence, I would not be where I am today.

As a professor, Dr. Schutte set a high standard of expectations for his students, while at the same time providing a level of support far beyond that dictated by the university. The combination of these two factors increased my self-awareness as a member of the academic community. After taking his classes, I felt confident pursuing goals which I had previously considered unattainable. In the process of demanding more of me as a student and providing the support to achieve this higher standard, I subsequently felt confident pursuing a PhD and a career in the academia after my time at CSUN ended.

As a mentor and chairperson of my MA thesis committee, a lot of the same attributes also surfaced. Dr. Schutte constantly challenged me to expand my understanding of the topic I was studying. Be it with suggestions of alternative theories and concepts, or with the introduction of different methodological tools and statistical techniques, he always pushed me (and encouraged me to push myself) to find unique and novel ways to study and understand the topic. The ability to absorb criticism as well as be critical of one's own work is a trait I have found absolutely essential in my current success. Without Dr. Schutte's instruction in this key component of academic life, my current endeavors would have been far more difficult.

In closing, during my time at CSUN, I often told fellow students that my experiences with Dr. Schutte allowed me to imagine that I was in an Ivy League university. But it is more than that. He coupled his high standards and criticism with a level of support which has been matched by few in my time at CSUN or since. Accordingly, I strongly encourage him for this award. I cannot think of anyone more deserving.

Sincerely,

Matthew Grindal