

March 2, 2012

Faculty Awards Committee
Faculty Senate

I write to support the nomination of Jerald Schutte for the Distinguished Teacher of the Year for 2012. In my capacity as Senior Director of Academic Technology at California State University, Northridge it has been my distinct pleasure to get to know and work with Professor Schutte. From his membership in CSUN's "cyber-seven" to his advocacy of e-textbooks to redesigning the physical and virtual classrooms Jerry has been a pioneer and a leader in the effective and efficient use of technology in higher education.

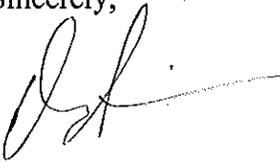
Jerry's well-deserved reputation for innovation in the use of technology in teaching extends far beyond the boundaries of CSUN, the CSU, and California higher education. As I was moving into the growing field of distance education administration in the mid-1990's I was searching high and low for solid evidence of the effectiveness of the new breed of online learning. Journals and conferences were filled with case studies of web-based courses, but no one was providing rigorous empirical evidence on the pressing question of the day – did students in online classes perform as well as those in traditional classes. No one, that is, until Jerry's seminal study reported in *Virtual Teaching in Higher Education*. This study that has been cited hundreds of times sparked a national debate that was of critical importance as distance learning was being reborn as online learning. As a member of the "cyber-seven" Jerry was doing pioneering work in teaching at CSUN. At the same time and as a social scientist he was studying his teaching practice and sharing the results both locally and nationally. Throughout his career this self-reflection, analysis and reporting have been a hallmark of Jerry's teaching. The results have been evident not only in the positive effects on his own teaching as evidenced by his stellar student evaluations, but by the effects he has had on teaching practice among his colleagues at CSUN, within the discipline of sociology, and more broadly in higher education.

First to teach an online class at CSUN and first to empirically study the effectiveness of online classes are but two of the many "firsts" that Jerry can claim. He has been an early innovator in many other areas of pedagogy and technology including hybrid courses, use of online peer and collaborative learning strategies, e-textbooks, student response systems, tablet devices, and lecture capture, to name but a few. Faculty pioneers in the use of technology are often what I would characterize as "technology evangelists." Though Jerry indeed a leader in teaching with technology, "pedagogy evangelist" and "student learning evangelist," while perhaps less flashy than "technology evangelist," are more appropriate descriptions of Jerry. While many such faculty technology pioneers are eager to try every new cool technology for its own sake, Jerry's motivation is always how the new technology or new technique will make him a better teacher and how it will improve his students' learning.

For the reasons cited above I am always eager, as an academic technology administrator, to seek Jerry's council. His work on various committees and task forces, including the Educations Resources Committee and the Ad Hoc Committee for Evaluation of Learning Management Systems, has been instrumental to policies and decisions related to instructional technology at CSUN.

Some technology pioneers are viewed by their colleagues as the "techie" one who can use all the cool tools, but not as the leader who can be followed by his less tech-savvy colleagues. From my discussions with his colleagues it is clear that Jerry has the opposite effect; with his ability to communicate the positive influence on teaching, his careful leadership and advice his colleagues follow the examples he has set.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Levin", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David S. Levin
Senior Director of Academic Technology