

To:
CASE
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April 8, 2010

Dear U.S. Professors of the Year Program Selection Committee,

I would like to express my admiration and appreciation for Professor Teri Balser at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. She is an icon of guidance and leadership for students here at the University and I am honored to write this letter in support of Teri for the Professor of the Year award sponsored by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. I believe she is the best candidate for this prestigious award based on her powerful and inspiring enthusiasm for teaching.

I have only known Teri since January of 2010, and in that short amount of time, she has truly inspired me to never give up and that anything is possible. I am a senior majoring in Biology at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. As a soon to be graduate, I have become accustomed to the "traditional" large lecture, presented via PowerPoint, with three multiple choice exams that determine everything. I have "suffered" through many classes where spending countless hours reading an over sized textbook into the wee hours of the morning, trying to learn every tid-bit of often unimportant facts, could make the difference between an A and a B. The bell-curve became my worst enemy. The focus too often moved away from learning the "big picture" and gaining a deeper knowledge and appreciation for a subject, towards a high tech world, often not suitable for 'real' learning.

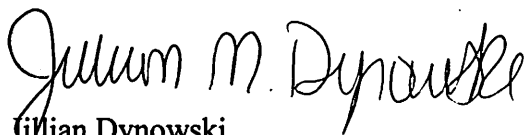
I had my first Soil Biology class with Teri and looked forward to learning about something new. She immediately began to stand out from all other professors I have had on campus. Her enthusiasm and love of teaching was evident from the beginning. Teri treated her class, not as a time to lecture to her students, but rather, as a time for interaction and discussion. Teri had an amazing ability to connect with all of her students, no matter what their level of knowledge was and focused on the "big picture" rather than countless dry facts from a textbook. As a student, I was always engaged and was able to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation for the subject. The focus was never on rote memorization, rather students were encouraged to ask questions and challenge their brains so as to encourage a deeper appreciation and build our own thinking skills. Teri was always interested in her student's learning. She had a knack for making even the most complicated of ideas, tangible and understandable to everyone. Her use of concept maps, drawings, and graphs made words on a paper come alive. She understood that not everyone learns the same way, and made an effort to accommodate everyone, whether

they be visual, auditory, or kinesthetic learners. Teri included pictures, movie clips, active discussion, and class projects in her syllabus and encouraged active thinking. She made herself accessible; Teri communicated with her students in online discussion forums and would go out of her way to find answers to any and every question we had. We learned from each other.

Through my experience in Teri's class, I have gained a much deeper appreciation for learning. I started this class with many questions, and while many have been answered, I left with even more. My mind still thinks about soil biology and I still find myself telling family and friends interesting things I learned from her class. My dad, a dedicated gardener, has just about had it with my criticism of his gardening and soil maintenance practices. Never before has one class had such an impact on me; I am even considering going to graduate school for soil biology or an agronomy related field. If I was not so close to graduating, I would have already switched my major. I have checked-out of countless books from the school library and still continue to read and further my understanding of what I learned in her class. She set a wonderful foundation and I am excited to make it stronger. I only hope that I will have the opportunity to further my education and be lucky enough to have another teacher like Teri.

Teri is organized, efficient, and has an excellent rapport with students of all levels and backgrounds. Her natural compassion is evident through her intense dedication to student learning and achievement. Teri's unwavering enthusiasm is apparent in her warm welcomes and instantly assures students that they *are* capable of achieving all their ambitions. That feeling is sometimes hard to come by at such a large university, yet Teri is capable of evoking it in every student she meets. Professor Balser is more than just a professor, she is a teacher, a mentor, an inspiration, and a friend. These intrinsic qualities are the basis of my unconditional support for Teri Balser in receiving the U.S Professor of the Year award. She truly deserves it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julian M. Dynowski". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julian Dynowski
University of Wisconsin, Madison