

# THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

4 April 2008



Selection Committee  
U.S. Professors of the Year Program  
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Dear Committee Members:

I am writing in support of **Jerusha B. Detweiler-Bedell**, who has been nominated by Lewis and Clark College for the 2008 U.S. Professor of the Year Award. I have known Jerusha since she was a graduate student. I collaborated with her on several publications, and I have kept in touch with her over the years. I admire Jerusha tremendously for her innovative and highly successful model of undergraduate teaching. In fact, I have sent several younger colleagues to her for advice, mentoring, and guidance as they began their own undergraduate teaching in psychology. Jerusha is my role model for excellence in all-around undergraduate education.

Jerusha's general approach is to engage students to become collaborators at all levels of instruction. In the classroom, she uses innovative activities to help students engage with the material and learn critical thinking and communication skills. Her syllabi show a clear curricular plan in the sense that her introductory courses have a different format requiring (and promoting) more basic skills than do her advanced courses, which are clearly geared to nurturing students' intellectual independence and leadership skills. She is genuinely open to students' informed opinions and eager to grow and learn along with the students. Outside class, she is generous with her time, making herself very available to students at all levels and regularly attending student-oriented campus activities to show her support and be more involved in university life. Jerusha is equally attentive to young students enrolled in relatively large classes and to more advanced students engaged in directed research in her lab.

Lewis and Clark has recognized Jerusha for her outstanding teaching by naming her as a Finalist for Teacher of the Year every year since 2005. The mean for her teaching evaluations over more than 500 students is very close to the top of the scale. I am sure this is true for every nominee you are considering, and certainly, knowing Jerusha as I do, these ratings do not surprise me. What is remarkable is that students give her these top marks while simultaneously noting how hard they have to work in her classes and tutorials. This theme comes through consistently in her student evaluations that I read in preparation for this letter. "One of the hardest grades I have ever earned." "I have never had another class at Lewis & Clark that demanded as much of me." "She consistently demanded that I rise to meet new challenges." Clearly, these student evaluations are based on more than Jerusha being a very nice woman who is well organized and a clear communicator. She is turning these students on, motivating them to strive academically.

All of these in-class activities are certainly evidence of good undergraduate teaching. What makes Jerusha worthy of being named as a U.S. Professor of the Year is her teaching outside the

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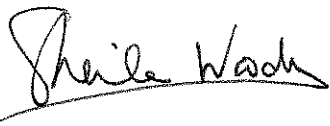
classroom. Jerusha has shown a scholarly approach to teaching the science of psychology to undergraduates, modeling collaborative research and helping them get engaged with it. She and her husband have developed an innovative model that organizes undergraduate research into three-student hierarchical teams in which younger students are supported to actively learn about the research endeavor while older students learn important mentoring skills and develop scholarly independence. This aspect of Jerusha's teaching is the most inspiring to me personally, because I know firsthand the difficulties of engaging undergraduates in a psychology research lab. Jerusha and her husband have published material on their original approach and attend conferences on undergraduate research and teaching. In addition, she has sought and obtained several grants to enrich undergraduate teaching, including a curriculum revision grant to get students involved in the community, an NSF REU pilot program grant, and faculty/student collaborative research fellowships from Lewis & Clark. The Detweiler-Bedells have applied for funding from NSF to substantially enhance the laddered teams approach, although final decisions have not yet been made on their application.

The laddered team approach to research is an apt model for how research in psychology and other laboratory sciences works, and it promotes skills that will serve students well no matter what path their careers might take. Not only do students work closely with each other to design studies, collect data, statistically analyze the data, and write up the results, but also they regularly publish their work with Jerusha. She also takes her undergraduate student collaborators with her to present their collaborative efforts at major professional conferences in psychology. Seeing undergraduates at a conference is fairly unusual in psychology. With Jerusha's mentoring, her students have successfully competed for research and travel grants as well as admission to postgraduate education programs in psychology, business, law, and education. She helps them to participate in every aspect of research, providing them with appropriate supports to allow them to succeed in spite of their youth.

Jerusha's example of undergraduate education is both inspiring and humbling. In an era in which researchers seem to be ever more specialized and focused on their own productivity, Jerusha stands out as a very different breed. Motivated by genuine interest in students and powered by her creativity, Jerusha has found ways to educate the whole student, not just cover the relevant material. I hope you honour her with this award so she can serve as an inspiration to more university educators.

Please feel free to contact me at [sheila.woody@ubc.ca](mailto:sheila.woody@ubc.ca) or (604) 822-2719 if you have questions.

Sincerely,



Sheila Woody, Ph.D., R.Psych.  
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Director of Clinical Training

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