



October 23, 2009

Dean Andrew Schoolmaster
TCU Box 297200
Fort Worth, TX 76129

Subject: Letter of Support for Dr. Curt Rode—for the Deans' Teaching Award

Dear Dean Schoolmaster:

It is with great enthusiasm that I write this letter of support for Dr. Curt Rode to receive the Deans' Teaching Award. I have known Dr. Rode for the six years that I have been at TCU, and I can say without reservation that he is one of our top teachers. He is a dedicated educator who has consistently earned praise from his students— and earned the respect of his faculty colleagues—for his work in and out of the classroom.

In many ways, Dr. Rode represents the range of diverse teaching we offer in the Department of English, with his unique qualifications to teach courses not only in composition, rhetoric, and new media, but also in literature and creative writing. Dr. Rode regularly offers courses in these areas, and he welcomes opportunities to teach at all levels: reaching out to students when they first arrive at TCU, helping seniors prepare for life after graduation, and teaching graduate students the importance of in-depth study (both in the Department of English and the MALA program). Along the way, he encourages his students—in and out of the classroom—to challenge themselves, to think beyond the walls of the classroom, and take intelligent risks that allow them to see the world anew.

Dr. Rode's accomplishments are most notable in his leadership for creative writing at TCU, cultivating a community of student writers at TCU that had been languishing for years. He was instrumental in inspiring student writers to form a group for themselves: a creative writing society that now meets regularly to discuss works in progress and share common struggles and achievements. With Dr. Rode's guidance, the group produced its own literary magazine, *eleven40seven*, which is now heading into its tenth volume (appearing in both print and online versions). Finding their roots in TCU's rich history of creative writing, they discovered that an earlier incarnation of the group was named The Bryson Literary Society, founded in the 1930s and named after Dr. Walter Bryson, former Chair of the English Department. Over the years, *eleven40seven* has generated interest among new students and sustained pride among our advanced majors. Moreover, every new issue is celebrated with a public reading, allowing students to read their creative works in a public setting. In recent semesters, Dr. Rode has worked with our colleagues to expand work in creative writing, by generating "broadside poems" (single poems printed on small posters) and organizing events with TCU's fine arts community, ranging from music performance to the visual arts. While Dr. Rode would be too modest to take credit for these accomplishments, I simply must say on his behalf that he has made the creative writing community at TCU what it is today.

Of course, none of these accomplishments would have been possible without Dr. Rode's classroom energy, wit, and enthusiasm. From his first semesters at TCU, Dr. Rode quickly gained recognition among our majors

and (unintentionally) developed an undergraduate Frog following that called themselves “Rode’s Toadies,” returning to him for subsequent semesters of his instruction. Recent Student Perception of Teaching (SPOT) forms reveal how students appreciate his passion for teaching: “Dr. Rode is a wonderful professor, and I appreciate his insight and instruction”; “I loved this class—I plan on taking two more of Dr. Rode’s classes”: “This class is structured very well . . . perhaps the best I’ve had in any class yet. I know where we’re going, and the teaching strategy is helpful and interesting, which keeps me going”; “He was very encouraging and respectful of students comments”; and, perhaps the most common, overarching comment about his classes: “Dr. Rode rocks!” And I couldn’t agree more. Curt Rode inspires me to generate the same sort of enthusiasm from my own students, and I have all the more respect for him because his students love his classes even though he holds them to high standards. In fact, over the years I have witnessed him pay special attention to students who were struggling with university life: students who resorted to plagiarism rather than write their own work, students who confronted racial insensitivity from their peers, and students who simply had trouble making it through the semester because of personal problems. As much as Dr. Rode enjoys time with the students who learn and grow from his instruction, he also takes great pains to ensure that the quiet, the worried, and the confused are not left by the wayside. Put simply, Dr. Rode is an excellent teacher who motivates and inspires for the students’ sake, not for his own edification. It is not at all surprising, then, that he has directed four theses for Honors students and served as a reader for two other thesis projects—all long-term commitments that demand ongoing dialogue, formative feedback, and honest critique for students.

I truly believe that good teaching is contagious. I have observed Curt Rode teach his classes, I have participated in professional development workshops that he has led, and I have seen him work one-on-one with dozens of students over the years. Almost without fail, I come away from such moments with a new idea, a more refined strategy, or a creative spark that I can fold into my own pedagogy. In my three years working with him at the New Media Writing Studio, I have been amazed at—and continue to be impressed with—how tenaciously he works to find ways to revitalize the role of the written word in the digital age, providing the intellectual leadership for our department to prepare for the decades ahead.

When our university makes the case that TCU is “ahead of the curve,” it can do so because teachers like Dr. Curt Rode are part of the faculty. We are better because he is here.

Thank you for considering my nomination.

With kindest regards,



Brad E. Lucas
Associate Professor of English
Chair of the Department

CC: File