

Memo

January 21, 2010

To: Faculty Development Committee

From: Andrea Lachance, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Chair
Childhood/Early Childhood Education Department

Re: Nomination of Dr. Lin Lin for an Excellence in Teaching Award
Childhood/Early Childhood Education Department

This memo is to strongly endorse the selection of Dr. Lin Lin as the 2010 winner of the Excellence in Teaching Award. I have known Dr. Lin Lin since she was first interviewed for her position at SUNY Cortland in the spring of 2005. I served as chair of the search committee that hired her and have observed her teaching numerous times during her years at Cortland.

Since my first experience with Dr. Lin Lin during her interview, I have been impressed with the excellence of her teaching. Dr. Lin Lin is an enthusiastic and passionate teacher, and I remember being impressed with her teaching style even during her interview. Through her energetic presentations, Dr. Lin Lin demonstrates that she clearly loves what she does. Her teaching presentations are engaging, entertaining and enlightening, and students consistently rave about her teaching efforts.

Dr. Lin Lin is one of the most reflective teachers I have observed. She thinks deeply about what types of activities will best help her students develop as future teachers. She is particularly passionate about her field, social studies education, where one of the goals is to help preservice teachers understand and develop multiple perspectives on history, culture, and society. Dr. Lin Lin seeks to make any course she teaches a transformative experience. She is not satisfied with having students learn about the “content” of the elementary school social studies curriculum and what needs to be taught. She wants students to develop the critical thinking and evaluative skills to examine their own assumptions and biases in teaching children about social and cultural issues. Thus, she helps our preservice teachers understand that how they approach the teaching of social studies – or any content area - is deeply connected to how children will make sense of what they are being taught about the world around them.

I have been consistently impressed with the innovative and creative assignments Dr. Lin Lin has developed to help her students learn. Her Windows on the World assignment, where

students have to conduct research to develop an understanding of third world and developing countries is one such activity. Many of our students have no knowledge of the culture and history of countries outside of the first world. This research and presentation assignment helps students begin to develop a greater appreciation for cultures very different from their own. In feedback Dr. Lin Lin has collected, students find this assignment “eye-opening.”

Dr. Lin Lin also uses multiple tools to support her teaching. She has developed extensive on-line resources to support her students. She also makes regular use of community and campus resources. On multiple occasions, Dr. Lin Lin will take students on field trips to local schools to work with children or to various local sites to learn about local history or current events. She also routinely collaborates with colleagues both within our department and across campus to create interdisciplinary activities. For example, in our department, Dr. Lin Lin is credited with developing an engaging activity about environmental issues which she uses with our Block One students during their trip to Raquette Lake each semester. The activity incorporates the content areas of science, social studies, and literacy, and has particular relevance for students during their time at Raquette Lake. Colleagues routinely “borrow” this activity for use with their students.

From my perspective, Dr. Lin Lin’s energy and enthusiasm, combined with her passion for teaching, mark her as one of the best teachers in our academic community. She is a generous, positive colleague who is widely respected as an excellent teacher. Students and peers alike consistently admire and appreciate her outstanding teaching. I therefore strongly support Dr. Lin Lin’s application for this award.