

To the selection committee,

I am writing this letter in support of Dr. Dean Ramser. Dr. Ramser is an associate faculty member at Riverside City College, and I had the pleasure this year of observing his teaching and conducting his improvement of instruction evaluation this semester at RCC. From my observation of Dr. Ramser's highly-organized and culturally responsive teaching, along with the rapport I could tell he definitely had with his students, to his continued commitment to innovation and research in teaching, I believe Dr. Ramser would make an excellent addition to your full-time faculty.

I had the chance to observe Dr. Ramser's class this spring, and from this observation, I could tell he was popular with his students, but also quite organized and rigorous with his assignments in English 1A (RCC's four-unit college composition course).

When I arrived in his class, Dr. Ramser's students were engaged in a metacognitive exercise, debriefing their most recent paper, writing responses to questions like, "what did you like about it [the essay]?" and "what did you not like about it?" After a time writing alone, Dr. Ramser solicited responses from the students, and a few shared their opinions on the writing process, including how they enjoyed exploring topics they had personally selected, as Dr. Ramser provides relative freedom to students to explore topics in their writing that are meaningful to them.

Following this activity, Dr. Ramser collected their work in folders, and for the students who did not have folders with them, he provided one. He then turned to the computer screen and pointed out some screenshotted pages of the text book, *Everything's an Argument*. He introduced the new topic, arguments of fact, and he provided students with two hand-outs with lists of questions (from the textbook) designed to stimulate discussion of arguments of fact.

From there, the students worked in groups to discuss various arguments of facts, followed by a whole-group class discussion, where Dr. Ramser for their opinions on the arguments of fact that the students had discussed, allowing each group to share. He then asked the students to think about how they might present their chosen arguments in the form of a poster, showing them examples of visual arguments both from screenshots in the textbook, and from online resources.

From this observation, and also his class materials and the student opinion questionnaires collected that day, I could tell Dr. Ramser had several strengths in his teaching:

1. The textbook, assignments, and topics of discussion seemed appropriately rigorous for the course, focused on critical thinking and research.

2. Dr. Ramser, from his syllabus, to his attendance system, to his prompts, to his lesson plans, is incredibly organized, and I can tell that his lessons and curriculum are well-thought-out.
3. I appreciate how well Dr. Ramser integrated the textbook into the course. Sometimes the textbook can seem like a superfluous aspect of the course, but Dr. Ramser made it essential. In fact, he made a point to positively reinforce students for textbook use in class by giving them extra participation points for doing so.
4. Dr. Ramser employed several strategies to accommodate potentially low-income students by providing them with resources (including providing students who did not have folders with a paper folder and printing out their assignments for their writing lab hour that week to save them money on printing). This was a small gesture, but it clearly demonstrated to students that he cared and that he wanted them to succeed.
5. Dr. Ramser, as he discussed various pre-writing strategies, made a good point to acknowledge a plurality of learning styles (visual, auditory, etc.) and made suggestions to accommodate different kinds of learners.
6. Dr. Ramser also had a fun mnemonic device for learning all of his students' names. Each student chose a silly or descriptive alliterative adjective at the beginning of the course, such as "marvelous Marissa" or "vivacious Valerie." While a somewhat silly practice, this allowed Dr. Ramser to know each student by name, but also to give them a chance to define themselves (even through a funny adjective).
7. Dr. Ramser's subject matter in the course is both engaging and enjoyed by the students, giving them freedom to explore topics that are important to them while maintaining a foundation of critical thinking and rigor.
8. Dr. Ramser is universally well-respected by the students surveyed. In their comments, they said they appreciate his preparation and organization, his relaxed demeanor/relatability, his flexibility, his enthusiasm, his engaging/real-world-applicable writing assignments/topics, his willingness to help and answer questions, and his understanding of student needs and struggles.
9. Dr. Ramser's syllabus is clear, well-organized, and includes all of the requisite material from the Course Outline of Record. My only suggestion for the syllabus concerns some of his more punitive language. I think he could maintain the same policies but use a little less intimidating language to make his syllabus seem more accessible to students.
10. Dr. Ramser's assignments in the course are appropriately relevant and rigorous for the English 1A level. His first essay, for instance, asking students to identify a group of learners facing educational barriers and proposing a solution for that group, allowed students the academic freedom to explore topics important to them, but also focus on relevant contemporary topics—in this case, equity in education. This essay's research requirement and calls for critical thinking and source synthesis reinforced the desired skills in the student learning outcomes for English 1A.
11. In addition to this first essay, I was also intrigued by Dr. Ramser's semester-long HIP/Slice "Fix-It" journal and essay, requiring students to observe a local community issue and actively participate in activities surrounding it, including but not limited to volunteer work or community interviews. Not only does this underscore the critical



thinking elements of the course, but it also seems culturally relevant (as several of the students commented in the evaluations, they enjoyed the freedom and relatability involved in these types of assignments). I am also aware that Dr. Ramser presented a version of this assignment at Cal State Dominguez Hills's most recent faculty research symposium, demonstrating that Dr. Ramser has his finger on the pulse of continued professional development, research, and innovation in the field.

12. Furthermore, I thought the way Dr. Ramser uses in-class essay assignments for his midterm and final exam by essentially mirroring the graduate writing exams of some Cal States was wise. Not only will it prepare students for the kinds of timed writing they might encounter in the future, but it also promotes transferring and continuing in higher education as an expectation, rather than an exception.

Overall, I believe Dr. Ramser would be an excellent addition to any institution's full-time teaching staff. As Riverside City College is a Hispanic Serving Institution with approximately a 66% Latinx student population, it is noteworthy that the students felt validated and free to explore topics and subject matter in their writing that were relevant and affirming to their lived experiences. Not only are Dr. Ramser's assignments relevant, rigorous, and culturally responsive, but his students feel that he is caring, helpful, and approachable, and that he is ultimately in their corner. This relational component is hard to underestimate, especially considering how strongly faculty-student engagement and validation are related to student success according to the literature. Furthermore, Dr. Ramser's continued commitment to developing his assignments and curricula as evidenced by his continued research in the field, demonstrates that Dr. Ramser will be a life-long self-improver, to continually respond to the changing needs of his students.

I would be happy to further discuss Dr. Ramser's qualifications at (714) 296-2608, or at Daniel.Hogan@rcc.edu.

Sincerely,

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