



Cerritos College

8 January 2014

To whom it may concern:

Dean Ramser is a part-time faculty member in English at Cerritos College, and not only has he proven to be a skilled instructor of developmental writing and motivator of students, but he has played a role in the launch of a new program for some of our most at-risk students. As chair of the English department, I hired Dean after a successful interview and recruited him, after strong student feedback from his initial classes, for this new initiative. He is a skilled teacher of writing and students recognize his compassion and approachability. While I would be sorry to lose him as a colleague at Cerritos College, I recommend him for a full-time position in your English department.

We hired Dean in January 2012, noting his strong high school teaching experience coupled with his adjunct work at the California State University, Los Angeles, during and after the completion of his Master's degree in English. The situation at Cerritos College was unusual: in the midst of budget and class cuts, the college had announced on January 3 that we had enough FTES to add several additional sections of writing classes to the spring 2012 schedule, which would begin 7 days later. By the time the interview process was complete, Dean had little time to prepare his syllabus for English 52, Introduction to College Writing, one level below Freshman Composition. However, by Monday morning he had his syllabus complete, from college policies to class SLOs, he had mastered the system for downloading rosters and managing the first day attendance policies, and the class proceeded as though he had been at the college and teaching it for years. Student response to his class was strong, and he could boast of a retention rate of above 90% for the class.

As a result of his strong start, and with his experience as a high school teacher in mind, I recruited him this summer to teach our newly revised English 15, Basic College Writing. This class serves a population of students seriously at risk of never completing their college goals; students in the class placed three levels below Freshman Composition, and, historically, only 6% of students on average who enrolled in the class completed Freshman Composition within 3-6 years, meaning they would never complete a degree or transfer. Additionally, the class serves an unusually high number of students who enter our Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS); historically, 35% of students enrolled are a part of DSPS. Add to that many students' second-language struggles in the class, making for a particularly challenging experience.

These challenges aside, Dean eagerly accepted the challenge to teach two intensive 9-week sections of the course this fall, preparing him to spearhead our spring 2013 course revision as we move it to the Adult Education program, making it a non-credit course that, following the same course outline, allows for repeatability and prepares students to

re-assess and place in a higher-level writing class. Dean has worked closely with the director of Adult Education, the dean of DSPS, and myself to design the class and offer the pilot this fall, and he will teach two sections of it in spring 2013. His classes that I have visited were surprising: these were motivated, eager writers who, while still struggling, were actively engaged with a variety of subjects, from basic grammar and editing, to paragraph and essay structure, to peer review of short essays, to motivational exercises in Skip Downing's *On Course*, to beginning analyses of *The Kite Runner*. Importantly, Dean has designed the course to be highly kinetic, with students working together in small groups to complete these tasks. When the group is ready, they present their work to the rest of the class, eager to instruct their peers. Throughout, he moves from group to group, managing their responses, answering questions, and offering praise and support. He makes the rounds of the groups easily, knowing all of his students' names and chatting with them about their projects and the things happening in their lives. The result is a classroom of what otherwise might be unmotivated, struggling remedial writers who instead are fully engaged and prepared, who have begun a foundational understanding of the elements of academic reading and writing. The students I witnessed are motivated both to succeed for him and to reach their goals, most immediately to achieve the next level writing class.

Add to this Dean's active participation in the academic community, particularly his frequent presentations at local and national conferences both on writing and pedagogy, and on the focus of his graduate studies, African American and Postcolonial literature.

Dean Ramser has been a welcome addition to our department, and he has played an important role in creating a new program for our most at-risk of writers. I have no doubt that he will be hired as a full-time faculty member in English somewhere in the near future, and I recommend him for such a position based on the work with developmental writers that I have had the pleasure to witness at Cerritos College. If I may be of any further assistance in his application process, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



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