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October 22, 2009

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I am writing this Letter of Support for Dr. Curt Rode. Being a former student, I feel I can write with authority as to why you should consider him for the Dean's Award in Teaching.

I had the pleasure of taking three courses with Dr. Rode during my time at Texas Christian University: American Poetry, a Graduate level Creative Writing—Poetry course, and a directed-study in Contemporary British Poetry.

During my time at TCU, I was an English Major with an interest in creative writing, specifically poetry. My first course with Dr. Rode was American Poetry and, having studied poetry on my own for a while, I was interested to see how the course would turn out. Dr. Rode, without a doubt, is one of the best professors at TCU. The way he conducted that course was fueled with intellectual concern for the content as well as passion for the subject and tradition of poetry in America. We left his class with confidence in our ability to read and interpret a poem, not to mention a whole new perspective on the craft and art of poetry. My peers and I were challenged intellectually in so many different ways in his course, and were encouraged to continue promoting the tradition of poetry with the "P3 Project." Each student was asked to be "good stewards" of poetry and try to expose the public to the art. My group went and taught poetry to a third grade class and a high school English class, in hopes that we would get more generations of students to think of poetry in different ways. Other students created websites devoted to poetry or "sidewalk poems" in order to make poetry more accessible to the general public. I believe that this sort of involvement helped not only us as students become more involved in the art, but perhaps someone in the community, as well. In my opinion, Dr. Rode cares a great deal for his students' learning process, and is always looking for ways to get them more involved in the subject.

My love for poetry and my desire to pursue writing in the future led me to continue taking courses with Dr. Rode. He accepted my request to take the graduate level Creative Writing—Poetry course and my experience there was invaluable. Now that I am in a MFA program, I can say for a fact that the course helped prepare me for my graduate school experience, especially in the workshop setting. In many ways, the manner in which Dr. Rode taught and conducted the creative writing course is superior, in my opinion, to the experiences I've had in certain similar settings in the MFA environment.

He combines critical reading and analysis of contemporary poets' work with peer critiquing and workshop so that there is a well-balanced perspective on what is being written within the established community. From there, students learn from mature poets the act of conversing with the tradition. My writing matured by leaps and bounds in this setting because, for the first time in my life, I was able to learn how to be a part of a writing community, and Dr. Rode taught the course with enthusiasm and respect for the art. It was inspiring to see how my peers and I improved our writing and knowledge of craft within the span of that semester.

Dr. Rode and I worked together in an Independent Study setting as well, which was a wonderful experience. I needed a Capstone course for my Minor in British Studies and chose Contemporary British Poetry in order to continue my studies in poetry as well as to have another chance before graduation to work with Dr. Rode. Again, this was an invaluable experience. I am so glad Dr. Rode chose to take the extra time to work with me.

I could site pages of examples of why Dr. Rode is a fantastic teacher, but what speaks volumes is the legacy professors leave as their students go on to pursue life outside the university. My experience with Dr. Rode certainly helped me prepare for where I am now, and I am in debt for his support during my application process to graduate schools. Dr. Rode took the time to help me go over my writing portfolio, essays, statements of purpose, and agreed to write letters of recommendation for me, even though my decision to apply to graduate schools was last minute. Now, having been accepted and one year into my studies at Sarah Lawrence College for a MFA in Poetry, I can say with certainty that Dr. Rode played a major role as both a mentor and teacher in my life.

I believe that there are countless other students who can say the same for Dr. Rode. His involvement with his students is impressive. Not only is he active in the classroom, but he encourages students to get involved as well, whether that be the "P3 Project" or the Literary Society, of which he is the faculty advisor. Dr. Rode, with his commitment to, and passion for, learning, helps facilitate community within the classroom, the department, and the university in various, exciting ways.

Shannon Hardwick