

SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

300 West Dean Keeton Street A1000 • BMC 3.338 • Austin, Texas 78712-0113 • 512-471-1845 • FAX 512-471-7979
journalism.utexas.edu

Dec. 22, 2014

To the Selection Committee
Regents' Outstanding Teaching Awards

Dear Committee:

It is my pleasure to endorse the nomination of Dr. Kris Wilson for a Regents' Outstanding Teaching Award in the non-tenure track category. A senior lecturer in journalism, Dr. Wilson earns stellar evaluations from students across a range of tough courses – notably in required classes that received middling instructor ratings before he took them on. The quantitative evidence is impressive enough, but it tells just part of the story. Again and again, in qualitative reviews of his teaching, the students write comments such as these: “I repeatedly witnessed firsthand the boundless support, encouragement and dedication Dr. Wilson unreservedly gives his students”; “We want to do our best because of his interactive and respectful teaching style”; “He has had the strongest influence on my college career;” and “Every time I write a story, I imagine what he would say, or advise, or critique.” The common theme: deep respect and fondness that speak to Dr. Wilson's mastery of the subjects he teaches and a rare ability to challenge and nurture every student in his orbit.

Dr. Wilson has played a pivotal role in transforming a once-problematic broadcast sequence of journalism courses into a successful area of our curriculum. He excels as a teacher of both lecture and workshop-style classes that increasingly emphasize the mindsets and technical skills that UT students will need to thrive in a multimedia age. At the same time, he has proven his versatility – and drawn upon a professional background combining climatology, geography and television news – to teach highly regarded courses in science and environmental journalism. Last spring, he taught four courses, one more than required of senior lecturers in the School of Journalism. They included an additional section of J330F: TV Reporting, which was offered in response to student demand, and a new Maymester course, titled “Reporting on Our Changing Environment: Queensland, Australia.” The study-abroad course was the culmination of meticulous planning, as Dr. Wilson guided a group of undergraduate and graduate students on a four-week educational journey to the Great Barrier Reef, to several of the oldest forests on the planet, and to an Outback oasis visited by Aboriginals for more than 20,000 years. The students' work can be found on a website they created: <http://moody.utexas.edu/reportingaustralia>

This fall, I observed Dr. Wilson in the classroom, and it didn't take long to see why students rush to take his courses. Without exception, the students in this particular class, J331G: Audio Storytelling, were hooked by Dr. Wilson's supportive, comfortable teaching style. He creates an atmosphere of high standards, intellectual curiosity, and trust.

He is known for an open-door policy after class and for his extraordinary efforts to help students obtain professional internships and jobs after they graduate.

Beyond excellence as a teacher, Dr. Wilson has demonstrated a commitment to innovation in undergraduate education by taking a leadership role on the committee that reshaped the School of Journalism curriculum, leaving behind the old print, magazine, broadcast, photo and multimedia sequences. The new curriculum, which took effect in Fall 2012, provides progressive immersion in the digital thinking and techniques that drive today's "converged," mobile media world. Yet it preserves and strengthens core course requirements in journalism ethics, history and law, as well as the fundamentals of accurate newsgathering and clear writing. As a member of the school's Undergraduate Studies Committee, Dr. Wilson continues to guide and grow our course offerings. Given the interdisciplinary nature of his research, he also is invited to guest lecture in classes in other units across campus, particularly in the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies.

I hope you will agree that Dr. Wilson is very deserving of the Regents' Outstanding Teaching Award.

Sincerely,



R.B. Brenner
Director, School of Journalism
G.B. Dealey Regents
Professorship in Journalism



School of Communication
Office of the Dean
Water Tower Campus
820 N. Michigan Ave. | Chicago, IL 60611
Phone 312.915.6548

January 5, 2015

Selection Committee
Regents' Outstanding Teaching Award
University of Texas
Austin, TX

Selection committee:

I am writing in strongest possible support of the nomination of Kris Wilson's nomination for the Regents' Outstanding Teaching Award.

I have known Kris for over two decades and had the pleasure of working side-by-side with him for several years when I was on the faculty at UT. When I was at Texas, Kris was an outstanding colleague. He's an academic who cares deeply about broadcast news. He spent ten years working in the news business and now has continued to work hard to establish and maintain relationships with broadcast news professionals. He has established contacts across the country, he attends professional meetings and he frequently visits local and state news outlets to keep in touch with news industry trends. As well, he has worked as a free-lance weathercaster at local stations there in Austin.

Dr. Wilson is an outstanding teacher, perhaps the best I've worked with in my over 20 years in the academy. He cares deeply about his students. To me one thing that distinguishes someone from being a good teacher to being a great teacher is empathy. Kris cares deeply for every student, working hard with each of them to help them learn, find their own voice, and do outstanding work.

Kris Wilson is a creative and innovative instructor. Students love Kris, but he's no pushover; he's a tough grader who holds students to excellent standards. But he does so in a compassionate way. He teaches students what will be expected of them in the broadcast journalism field and helps them as a coach and mentor. He develops innovative curriculum that is responsive to industry changes. Kris consistently works to improve his courses and introduce new, innovative classes, such as the one he taught on reporting on the environment in Australia.

Kris has put together a strong research agenda, establishing himself as a national expert on communicating science through news. He's been asked to participate in national projects on science reporting and invited to lecture to both national and international organizations

because of his expertise. Having been a former division head of the Radio and Television Journalism division of Association of Journalism and Mass Communication Education and knowing many of the broadcast news teachers across the country, I can say without hesitation that Kris has very few peers as a teacher.

In short, I can say I have never worked with a better teacher and colleague than Kris Wilson. I can give my very strongest recommendation. If you'd like to talk to me further please feel free to call me at 312-915-6558.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Don Heider". The signature is stylized with a large, circular initial "D" and a long, sweeping horizontal stroke.

Don Heider
Dean & Professor



SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

300 West Dean Keeton Street A1000 • BMC 3.338 • Austin, Texas 78712-0113 • 512-471-1845 • FAX 512-471-7979
journalism.utexas.edu

December 31, 2014

Selection Committee
Regents' Outstanding Teaching Awards 2015
The University of Texas System Board of Regents

To the Members of the Committee:

I am delighted to write to you today to support the nomination of Senior Lecturer Kris Wilson for the Regents' Outstanding Teaching Award for 2015. I've enjoyed having Dr. Wilson as a colleague in the School of Journalism for five years now and admire both his prodigious teaching skills and his unflagging efforts to bring fresh perspectives and experiences to his students.

Case in point: In May of 2014, Kris took 14 students on a month-long reporting workshop to Australia entitled "Reporting on our Changing Environment: Queensland, Australia." This highly innovative Maymester program allowed students to examine firsthand the impact of climate change in one of the world's most complex and compelling natural environments. My informal reporting tells me the students loved this educational adventure as much as they profited from it. But that's hardly a surprise. At home or abroad, Kris Wilson is a master teacher who we're lucky to have on our faculty, both for what he gives the students and for what he teaches his fellow teachers by his example of dedication to craft.

In the interests of full disclosure, let me say that I was director of the School when we hired Kris in 2009 to help resuscitate our understaffed broadcast sequence. I'm therefore happy to say that he succeeded brilliantly in taking charge of the program—not only did he lead it in the direction of the digital future but also enhanced its focus on the fundamentals of good journalism. Dr. Wilson, a recognized authority on news media coverage of climate change issues, also added to our regular curriculum a timely course on environmental reporting through which he has deepened our teaching of such topical and important issues.

I've had the opportunity to sit in on Dr. Wilson's "Audio Storytelling" class, which produces stories for "Dispatch 40," the School's mainstay radio news program. The objective for the day in question was to critique the most recent batch of student-produced stories. Kris asked individual authors to discuss the challenges encountered in producing their pieces and the choices they had to make in handling evolving storylines. As story sound edits were displayed on the overhead screen, Kris led the discussion with an emphasis on eliciting student comment. He was careful to let the students take the lead

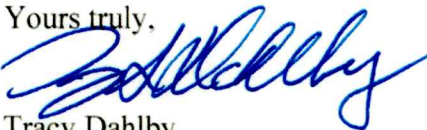
discussion with an emphasis on eliciting student comment. He was careful to let the students take the lead but also to sum up and fill in and thus he kept the conversation moving smartly forward. The approach ensured both student “buy in” and that nothing was overlooked. The students were engaged throughout and participated in the discussion in a disciplined, professional and incisive manner.

Critiquing student work in class can be a challenging assignment for any teacher but Kris pulls it off with consummate skill. He maintains an upbeat and constructive tone while passing along targeted, practical advice and big-picture guidance. Kris typically ends sessions by reminding his students of what lessons they should consider migrating from the assignment under review and into the next one. My overall impression is of a classroom natural-- an effective, unflappable communicator who is always well prepared, focused and committed to student progress. Kris is the kind of teacher who inspires his students to produce good stories and then rolls up his sleeves to help them achieve their goals. Robust teaching evaluations continue to reflect his success.

In a causal conversation one day, Kris put his commitment this way: The students “improve with our help,” he said, “and then to see them come back to the community I live in and [through their reporting] hold people accountable, improve our community – that’s pretty gratifying work we get to do.”

In sum, Kris is a consummate teacher who listens carefully to his students for opportunities to help them fulfill their potential as reporters and citizens. I should also note that he played a central role in committee work that led to the establishment of our new undergraduate curriculum in Fall 2012, which I believe can be fairly interpreted as a sign of his overall commitment to the School of Journalism, our teaching standards and our students. I therefore recommend Dr. Kris Wilson to you most highly and without any reservation whatsoever.

Yours truly,



Tracy Dahlby

Professor and Frank A. Bennack, Jr. Chair in Journalism



**SAN FRANCISCO
STATE UNIVERSITY**

Broadcast & Electronic
Communication Arts Department

1600 Holloway Avenue
San Francisco, California 94132-4157

Tel: 415/338-1787
Fax: 415/338-1168
E-mail: beca@sfsu.edu
www.sfsu.edu/~beca

December 30th, 2014

Dear Selection Committee,

I am writing to express my utmost support for Dr. Kris Wilson, who I wholeheartedly believe is the most worthy candidate for the 2015 Regents Outstanding Teaching Award. I was Dr. Wilson's Teaching Assistant from 1998-2001, during the majority of my time as a Journalism doctoral student at UT. After working closely with Dr. Wilson, I was promoted to Assistant Instructor and to my delight I taught my very own radio reporting class J322D in the 2002-2003 academic year. This would not have been possible without the invaluable mentorship and pedagogical training Dr. Wilson so passionately gave me. I am currently an Associate Professor at San Francisco State University where I have been teaching radio and television news production for over 10 years. I regularly receive outstanding teaching evaluations, and I give Dr. Wilson all the credit, since he taught me everything I know about being a great teacher.

I repeatedly witnessed firsthand the boundless support, encouragement and dedication Dr. Wilson unreservedly gives his students. He is an excellent teacher, who genuinely cares not only about advancing student knowledge but providing an essential foundation for their media careers as well. His advice often goes well above and beyond course content and into students' futures. Dr. Wilson has kept in touch with thousands of former students, and has even retained detailed archives of graded assignments. He is always available, not just for office hours, but at unconventional hours as well, and for the rest of his students' lives. I am confident that his teaching evaluations speak for themselves, but I can personally attest that Dr. Wilson is by far the best teacher in the Journalism school, and the best I've ever seen. There is no doubt in my mind that he deserves this award in recognition of the decades of teaching excellence he has provided to us Longhorn Journalism students.

To give you an idea of how dedicated this man is, let me try to explain the respect Dr. Wilson gives to his students' efforts at completing assignments. He gives them the most massive amount of comprehensive meticulous feedback I have ever seen in my life, even when he has a teaching assistant he could give all the work to. Nobody in their right mind can spend that much time and energy week after week, going over every last detail of student assignments to fully ensure that they are getting it right, and that they know exactly what they need to do to be better writers, reporters and producers. Except for Kris Wilson. His extensive professional newsroom experience has given him the stamina to commit long unconventional hours to the job, so he stays up late, works holidays and weekends, and puts in countless hours that other professors wouldn't, because he genuinely believes he owes it to his students. Dr. Wilson does an outstanding job of conveying the high-pressure environment of newsrooms and all facets of news production. He teaches students to work under pressure while maintaining an



**SAN FRANCISCO
STATE UNIVERSITY**

Broadcast & Electronic
Communication Arts Department

1600 Holloway Avenue
San Francisco, California 94132-4157

Tel: 415/338-1787
Fax: 415/338-1168
E-mail: beca@sfsu.edu
www.sfsu.edu/~beca

outstanding rapport with them. This sounds easy, but it is not a simple task to take on the role of a stern executive producer enforcing deadlines and demanding perfection, while being thoroughly likeable and commanding admiration and respect. The majority of his students have gone on to pursue impressive careers in radio and television journalism across the country and the world. If you ask any of them they will fondly look back on their time as students in Dr. Wilson's classes and attribute their success to not just what he taught them but how he taught them.

The impact of his teaching extends further than campus and well into his students' careers. His students, both current and alumni, all know that he is there for them if they need academic or career guidance. He is always willing to share advice based on his wealth of industry experience and his extensive record of research and publications. Such is the mark of a remarkably exceptional teacher who is truly adored and appreciated. It is extremely rare to find somebody that prioritizes students as Dr. Wilson.

In a nutshell, Kris Wilson is not just one of, but indeed THE BEST professor I have ever had the pleasure and honor of working with. He is a joy to learn from and always contributes humor, compassion, discipline, intellectual stimulation and professional excellence to the classroom. He is an enormously valuable asset to UT's Journalism department and I was very lucky to have learned from him. I strongly urge you to consider him for this prestigious academic recognition. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions regarding this letter.

Best Regards,

Dina Ibrahim, Ph.D.
Associate Professor
Broadcast and Electronic Communication Arts
San Francisco State University
Tel: (415) 338-1528
E-mail: dibrahim@sfsu.edu



SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

January 4, 2013

Selection Committee
2013 Regents' Outstanding Teaching Awards

It gives me great pleasure to recommend Dr. Kris Wilson for the 2013 Regents' Outstanding Teaching Award. I do not believe you would be able to find a more talented teacher or qualified candidate for this award.

I had the good fortune to work as a teaching assistant for Kris several times during my five years in the School of Journalism graduate program. He is one of the most effective teachers I have seen in any discipline or at any educational level. Since I now teach similar courses here at Indiana University, I have developed even more respect for Kris' teaching excellence.

Broadcast journalism courses are not easy to teach. Instructors need to hold the students to a professional standard so they will be competitive when they graduate. The courses involve complicated technology, which can cause frustration for the students. In addition, students put in more hours in these classes (especially the capstone newscast course), than probably any other courses they'll take in college. They must work with others, they have to learn how to accept criticism, and they need to improve from their mistakes.

Somehow, Kris is able to easily handle all of these issues and still connect with each student individually. He really cares about all of the students and they respond to that attitude. When I worked with him in Austin, they loved the guy. As a result, the students worked hard, turned out quality work, and graduated into successful careers. Take a look at the reporters and anchors on the air in Austin today and you'll find a bunch of people who give Kris Wilson credit for preparing them for television news careers.

One semester experience with the capstone newscast class stands out in my memory. The students decided they wanted to focus on presenting newscasts with a diversity of voices. I watched him work with the students on various small exercises to come up with ways to make the newscasts more representative of the community. Instead of settling for the obvious, and easier, path of doing a story or two each week from the other side of I-35, he showed them how they could include diversity in every story. If it was a medical story, he encouraged them to find a female doctor, or a person of color. If the story was about summer program funding, he showed them how to avoid the obvious choices of Barton Springs or Zilker Park, and instead focus on a

neighborhood that is rarely in the news. I've spent many years in television news and I was amazed at the sources and stories those students presented that summer. I would defy any local station to match the inclusion of communities that I saw in those newscasts.

UT-Austin is known around the country as one of the top broadcast news programs, and Kris is one of the reasons for that reputation. I believe he is an excellent choice for the Regents' Outstanding Teacher Award. If you have any questions or would like any additional information, I can be reached at mtconway@indiana.edu.

Sincerely,

Mike Conway
Associate Professor