# Letter A: Symons Award Nomination Written by an Undergraduate Student

**Note that all identifying information has been removed and gendered pronouns have been changed to they/them.**

I am writing this with hope that I can convey to you just how deserving \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is of the prestigious Symons Award for Excellence in Teaching. I have been fortunate enough to find myself in four of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s classes over the last three years. They created an enjoyable classroom experience which always made me look forward to attending each and every lecture.

Their teaching style is unique to every other professor I have had. They always implement unique learning experiences in addition to the traditional spoken lecture, such as practice problems, mini experiments, and ‘food for thought’ questions which always sparked classroom discussion. One memorable example of this was during our second-year \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ class when they had a handful of students stand up and participate with them in a visual representation of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. They handed each student a sticky note with a time in seconds written on it, which represented the number of seconds to pause between steps. Then, they and the students started at the bottom of the stairs in the lecture hall, and each began to climb the steps moving at various time intervals. After a minute or so, their separations became clear as did my understanding of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ technique.

When COVID challenged us all to rethink education, \_\_\_\_\_\_ completely overhauled their courses to provide us with an online experience that was the perfect mixture of asynchronous and synchronous material allowing for flexibility in learning the course content while still having access to real-time lessons and help. Most of my courses were presented either completely asynchronously or as live zoom classes with very one-sided lectures, often with the professor not visible to the students. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ exceeded all of my expectations of what it would be like to learn remotely, always making themself visible to the students and engaging us in conversation as we entered the zoom call, as we would have done in a physical classroom. This demonstrates not only their concern for their students’ academic progress but also our mental health as we dealt with learning in very isolating circumstances.

Outside the classroom, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ demonstrates exemplary concern for their students by consistently going out of their way to make themself accessible to their students. They are quite possibly the quickest person I know in terms of email response time, even outside of typical business hours. I will never forget the time I was working on a lab report for their class on a Saturday afternoon and I hit a roadblock, unsure how to proceed. I figured I would send \_\_\_\_\_\_ an email asking my question while it was still fresh in my head, with absolutely no expectation of a response until office hours Monday. To my surprise, they responded almost immediately engaging in clarifying dialogue until they knew that my question was resolved and I felt confident on how to proceed. This seemingly little act demonstrated to me that they were invested in me as a student and willing to make personal sacrifices to help me succeed.

In addition to consistently prompt email responses, \_\_\_\_\_\_is always willing to meet with students, whether it be during or outside of office hours, in person, or through zoom. I have experienced this personally, when on several occasions across all three years that I have had them as a professor they have gone out of their way to make themself available to meet outside of office hours if I had a conflict with the weekly time slot. During these extra meetings, they have never once made me feel rushed or as if I was inconveniencing them. They always take whatever time is needed to answer my questions about course content, help me with assignment questions, or talk me through personal moments of doubt.

The instance that stands out to me the most was when I went to meet with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ about the poor grade I had achieved on the midterm. Their insightful perception identified that what I was having difficulty with went deeper than the course content. I was at my lowest point academically and was beginning to question whether or not I was on the right path, and they picked up on that through my lack of confidence in the material we discussed. They became my biggest cheerleader, challenging me to learn from my mistakes and use those experiences to grow and push myself to become a better student every day. They shared with me their own passion for the subject, which inspired me to throw myself all in to the learning process, as I wanted to do anything in my power to be as excited and passionate about the subject as they were Since then, I have grown to develop my own love and passion for the subject and have completely changed my plan for the future.

It is due to \_\_\_\_\_\_’s unwavering support and encouragement that I have grown from a hesitant first year student, unsure of my place in the academic world, to a confident third year student looking forward to a bright future in a field for which I have found my passion. I wholeheartedly believe that there is no one more deserving of receiving the great honour that is the Symons Award. If I have managed to articulate even a fraction of what an incredible educator and personal inspiration \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is, then I know you will agree that they are worthy of such recognition.