Thank you for considering my nomination for the Presidential Award for Excellence in Teaching at the Professor/Associate Professor rank. I teach graduate courses in the Autism and Applied Behavior Analysis concentration of the Master’s Degree in Special Education (M.Ed.) program. My students become specialists in the education and treatment of children with developmental disabilities (primarily autism). Graduates work in schools, private autism treatment clinics or residential treatment facilities. Additionally, as a result of efforts to increase graduate students’ interest in research, many recent graduates have gone on to pursue doctorates at research intensive universities. My courses involve a variety of instructional techniques including lectures, organized class discussion/debate, role play of intervention and assessment techniques, peer-mediated instruction (i.e., students delivering lessons on assigned topics to other students) and projects completed outside of class. I evaluate student learning with weekly reading quizzes, writing assignments (e.g., book reviews), exams and rubrics for class projects. However, a great deal of my teaching occurs outside of the traditional classroom.

All of the information presented in my portfolio is within the last five years. I understand that the committee will be reviewing these materials for explicit evidence of sustained commitment; internal and external recognition; and significance or impact related to teaching. Therefore, I have organized this narrative in three sections corresponding to those criteria. In each section, I first bullet specific relevant evidence and then provide a brief description. References to Exhibits are embedded and I hope that the letters from former students (see Invited Letters and Exhibit 5) are given particular attention. If my portfolio is effective, my commitment to quality teaching both in and out of the classroom and to the ongoing mentoring of my students even after graduation will emerge as central themes.

**Sustained Commitment**

* Across five years and a total of 250 graduate student course evaluations, my average is a 4.9 (Exhibit 2)
* Since 2011, I have served on 13 Graduate Theses/Dissertations (4 in progress) & International External Examiner Committees (see CV and Invited Letter #4)
* I offer an independent study (SPED 5310) every year to graduate students seeking mentorship to conduct research (Invited Letters). This course does not count as part of my workload or teaching requirements.
* I developed two new graduate courses; Advanced Treatment of Challenging Behavior (SPED 5376; Approved in 2014) and Ethics, Trends, and Issues in the Treatment of Autism (SPED 5324; Approved in 2012).
* Since 2012 I have been the director of the Clinic for Autism Research Evaluation and Support (CARES); which is classified as an organized student activity.

Regardless of what they intend to do when they graduate, I encourage students to become “Practitioner-Scientists”. I define a Practitioner-Scientist as a person who is continually seeking a better way to do their job via the scientific method. For example, a special education teacher can collect data on child performance and adjust instructional strategies based on data analysis. Further, a Practitioner-Scientist stays informed regarding current research and adjusts their practice to stay aligned with the most current evidence in the field. Therefore, the scientific method is fundamental in all my courses. I expect all of my students to develop research skills regardless of what they intend to do when they graduate. In an effort to create a graduate school environment that motivates and supports the development of research skills, I offer an Independent Study (SPED 5310) at least once every year devoted to research mentoring. Although the course is not required in their degree plan (or counted in my workload), it has become a popular course among students. In some semesters, as many as five graduate students register for SPED 5310 and five more audit the course. I do not require that students register for this course to receive research mentoring but some want it on their transcript to buttress PhD program applications. The goal of the course is for students to design, conduct and publish research. Over the last five years, a total of 21 peer-reviewed publications have been authored by students taking this course (Exhibit 3) and students who go on to PhD programs cite this course as instrumental in preparing them for doctoral training (Invited Letters & Exhibit 5).

I became the director of the Clinic for Autism Research Evaluation and Support (CARES) in 2012. At that time, only one graduate student was involved in CARES. I developed CARES (now classified as an Organized Student Activity) to provide opportunities for students to conduct research and deliver clinical services directly to children with disabilities. Now, over a dozen students provide clinical services to over 30 children with disabilities every semester (~100 children served yearly). Nearly 100% of my graduate students intend to become Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA). The national certification board for behavior analysts requires students seeking a BCBA to complete up to 1,500 hours of supervised clinical work. I have organized CARES such that students are able fulfill their supervision requirement in CARES. Additionally, CARES provides the context for the majority of research conducted by my students. In an effort to foster motivation for research, I created the CARES’ Graduate Student Research Award. This honor is given to the graduate student who makes the largest contribution to the science of autism treatment each year. The awardee’s name is put on a plaque prominently displayed in the College of Education Building in hopes of inspiring future students. Finally, all of my course are closely connected to CARES to align research, practice, and coursework such that students learn to see research as an integral aspect of graduate school and as essential to effective teaching and clinical practice (Exhibit 1).

I hope my (a) consistently high course evaluation scores (4.9 across 5 years and 250 student evaluations); (b) directorship and development of the organized student activity CARES; and (c) ongoing research mentoring of graduate students beyond degree requirements (Invited Letters), will be considered explicit and specific evidence of my sustained commitment to teaching.

**Internal and External Recognition**

* Designated as “Favorite Professor” by the Alfred H. Nolle Chapter of the Alpha Chi National College Honor Society in Fall 2013 (Exhibit 4)
* Received 12 letters from the Graduating Student Recognition of Support Program between 2010 and 2015 (Exhibit 4)
* Nominated by former students for Association of Behavior Analysis International Outstanding Mentor Award

In my opinion, the most important teaching recognitions are those based on input from students. I am particularly proud of the letters I have received from the Graduating Student Recognition of Support Program. These letters are sent when a graduating student identifies a person they felt “contributed significantly to their success and development.” Many of these letters contain additional notes from the student (Exhibit 4) and I have sincerely cherished the 12 letters I have received since 2011. Recently, I received notification that I have been nominated by a number of former students for the Association of Behavior Analysts International Outstanding Mentor of the Year Award. The only way to be nominated for this award is to be identified by former students as having “encouraged and supported their professional development”. Although the winner has not yet been identified, winning would not mean as much to me as the fact that my students nominated me for the honor. I hope that the above referenced external and internal recognitions of my teaching considered in tandem with formal evaluations of my teaching (Exhibit 2) and the detailed letters from my former students (Invited Letters & Exhibit 5) will be considered explicit and specific evidence of teaching excellence.

**Significance and Impact**

* Ten graduate students I mentored have received full scholarships and stipends at research intensive universities in the last 5 years.
* My students have published/presented 21 peer-reviewed research papers; 5 book chapters; and 9 structured abstracts or reports; and 31 conference presentations in the last 5 years (Exhibit 3).

I believe the significance and impact of my teaching can be evaluated in terms of the accomplishments of my students and their impact on society. In addition to tremendous benefit to society as professionals serving children with disabilities, my students impact society by publishing socially impactful research. I aim to inspire students to feel the thrill of pursuing new knowledge and students who conduct research with me do so without any additional incentive (e.g., no extra credit). I hope the graduate student research productivity and full scholarships for doctoral training at research intensive universities around the world (e.g., Vanderbilt, Trinity College Dublin and University of Wellington in New Zealand) will be considered explicit and specific evidence of the significance and impact of my teaching (Invited Letters).

Sincerely, Russell Lang