

CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award – Nomination Packet: MARIUS FLORIN NICULESCU

Nomination Letter – Sridhar Narasimhan, Senior Associate Dean and ITM Professor, Scheller College of Business



January 21, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter to nominate Professor Marius Florin Niculescu for the **CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award**.

Since joining Georgia Tech's Scheller College of Business in August 2009, Florin has taught at both undergraduate and graduate levels. In every course he teaches, Florin puts great effort in offering a highly engaging classroom experience to students, striving to nurture interests in the topic, to facilitate creative and critical thinking, and to foster communication. He organizes teaching materials keeping in mind how the course fits in perspective in helping the students on their future career path, and he continuously improves his teaching based on students' feedback. To gain additional exposure to novel teaching techniques and materials in the field of information systems, Florin has participated in two IT Teaching Workshops (Georgia Tech in 2010 and the University of Michigan Ann Arbor in 2011).

UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING AND MENTORSHIP.

Over the past five and a half years, Florin significantly restructured the core MIS undergraduate course (MGT 2200) to balance breadth of topics and hands-on training. He developed a lot of the material for this course on his own. In the past, He taught 13 sections of this course (825 students). In Spring 2015, he is teaching this course for the sixth time (2 sections). Under the current format, he not only provides students with a rigorous introduction of relevant up-to-date topics related to the management of information systems at a conceptual level drawing abundantly from industry examples, he also introduces students to intermediate-level Excel, SQL, and elementary business analytics concepts through a variety of lectures and assignments. To enhance the level of student interaction and better gauge classroom learning, Florin has been using clicker technology in all iterations of this course, regularly polling students during lecture time on material that had just been taught the same day. In 2011, Florin received a \$7,000 grant from Rich Foundation to be used for the development and inclusion of business ethics topics in the curriculum. He used this grant to increase the prevalence of such topics in the course by adding more examples and enriching classroom discussions. In Spring 2014, he started using in-class cloud-based simulations of markets in order to introduce students to the importance of business intelligence (these game-style simulations were developed by Professor Abraham Seidmann from the University of Rochester and are employed as effective teaching tools at many universities). Furthermore, for the textbook he used in MGT 2200, Florin provided very useful feedback to the author, helping the author improve the quality of the book in newer editions.

Many students indicated that they enjoyed the topics, considered the acquired knowledge base and skills highly valuable, and learned a lot from Florin's MGT 2200 course. Students who graduated from the college also indicated that the concepts taught in MGT 2200 helped them with internship and job interviews as well as subsequent work. Thanks to his efforts, Florin received very high rating in students' teaching evaluation: an average of 4.7 (increasing over the past five years from 4.4 in Spring 2010 to 4.9 in Spring 2014). Based on his teaching performance, Florin was awarded the *Georgia Tech Class of 1940 Course Survey Teaching Effectiveness Award* for the past two years in a row (2013, 2014) and have been nominated three times for the *Undergraduate Professor of the Year Award* at the Scheller College of Business (2010, 2011, 2012).

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Moreover, Florin mentored a team of two undergraduate students from the College of Computing, who won the first place at Software AG's Innovation World 2014 Idea Contest (Award amount: \$10,000) with a concept for a system for crowdsourcing disaster relief. He also helped with the preparation of the undergraduate student team that represented Scheller College of Business at the 2014 Deloitte National Case Competition.

GRADUATE TEACHING AND MENTORSHIP

At the graduate level, Florin developed from scratch a PhD seminar (special topics course offered as a section of MGT 8803) to introduce students to both relevant research as well as analytical modeling frameworks and techniques applicable to the field of Information Systems. Students explore these techniques further through assignments that closely follow the taught material and they also learn how to use the software Matlab to implement various optimizations and simulations. At the conclusion of the course, students put forth a research proposal. Furthermore, Florin co-advised IT Management (ITM) PhD student German Retana on part of his dissertation and served on three PhD dissertation committees for ITM PhD students Jiao Xu, German Retana, and Tianshi Wu.

Florin also was closely involved in the administration and processing of second-year written ITM PhD exams as a grader (2010, 2012, 2014), question writer (2012), and proctor (2012). In addition, each year, Florin attended first and second-year PhD student research paper presentations and evaluated jointly with other ITM faculty the students' performance (2009-present).

In light of Florin's teaching and mentorship activities and accomplishments, I believe he is a strong candidate for the CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Sridhar Narasimhan

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Personal Teaching Statement

I have been an Assistant Professor of IT Management at Georgia Tech Scheller College of Business since August 2009. Since joining Tech, I taught at both undergraduate and PhD levels. Through teaching and mentoring, I strive to have a positive impact on my students' lives both in and outside the classroom. In both of these academic activities, I aim for excellence and I continuously seek to improve my performance. I regularly adjust my teaching based on both student and colleague feedback as well as self reflection. In addition, I participated in two IT teaching workshops (one at GT in 2010 and another one at U. Michigan Ann Arbor in 2011) in order to learn new teaching techniques for my field and get new teaching materials (e.g., business cases, in-class simulations, etc). Moreover, in Aug 2014, I became a member of the Undergraduate Committee at Scheller College of Business, playing an active role in the evaluation and approval of new courses and changes to the management concentrations/certificates.

My teaching philosophy, at a high level, is that instruction has to go beyond just delivering pieces of content (at foundation or advanced levels) through various educational mechanisms. I firmly believe that teaching should also open students' eyes to opportunities beyond the respective course and provide students with the skills and/or knowledge base necessary to proceed in the pursuit of these opportunities. When I structure my courses, I always pay close attention to how they fit within the degree and, beyond, how the courses can provide value to the students on their future career paths. I focus on sustaining an engaging classroom experience through which students can naturally and inquisitively ease into the topic and develop structured/critical/creative thinking.

At the undergraduate level, I have been teaching for 6 years (including the current semester) the core IT Management undergraduate course (MGT 2200). To me, as a faculty in the ITM group, this course is very important because, besides being a core class for all management concentrations, it is the very first course in the sequence of classes for the ITM degree in particular. As such, this course also represents an opportunity to help some students discover the ITM concentration. During the previous 5 iterations (Spring 2010-Spring 2014: 13 sections), I taught over eight hundred students. MGT 2200 is a large core class and, with very few exceptions, my sections have been subscribed close to capacity, as can be seen from the attached info on CIOS scores and enrollment. Since becoming an instructor for this course, I have extensively restructured the curriculum and developed new parts from scratch. MGT 2200 is a management course and, thus, it is important to keep the examples and methods up to date because the IT industry and the technology use cases evolve at a very rapid pace. I bring into my teaching a lot of industry examples that help students better relate to the material. I also link my teaching to my current research by touching on topics such as network effects, software quality, and freemium business models for mobile apps. Moreover, based on feedback from both students and industry recruiters, about 5 years ago the Scheller CoB and the ITM group identified a strong need to include more hands-on training in data management and manipulation tools at the undergraduate level. To fix this skill hole in the student training, I proceeded with incorporating more intermediate-level Excel, SQL, and elementary business analytics concepts in the course through both take-home assignments and lectures.

In all lectures I make extensive use of visual aids (slides, videos, projected SQL and Excel example walkthroughs directly from my computer to the screen). Furthermore, I rely on T-square to post the slides and other course resources online, provide grade feedback to students, receive assignments and return graded ones. I post slides ahead of the lecture (and assign readings in advance) so that each class we have more time to extensively discuss the material, go over more examples, and students do not have to write down everything (they still have to take some notes because I deliberately leave out of the slides certain parts). During class, I try to get a lot of students to participate in the discussions and rotate discussants to ensure a balanced class participation. To keep students even more engaged, I have been using from the very beginning the clicker technology. Each lecture, I post questions on the screen based on material just taught that very same lecture. This provides students with additional incentives to pay attention during lectures. After students submit a response via the clicker, I post the correct answer on the screen, and discuss it, giving immediate feedback to the class. Moreover, this gives me an opportunity to quickly gauge how students grasp the material (because I see the student answer statistics) and rapidly act if students did not understand a concept. In addition, in Spring 2014, I introduced a cloud-based market-simulation game in the course to illustrate the importance of business intelligence.

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Through unsolicited, mid-semester, and end of the course survey comments, many students expressed great appreciation for the course material and teaching experience (I attached with this packet a few samples of student feedback). Several students indicated that my course was of great help to them when dealing with interviews for internships and jobs, as well as performing various tasks at the workplace. My teaching evaluations over the past five years stand at a weighted average of 4.7, having gradually increased from 4.4 in Spring 2010 to 4.9 in Spring 2014. Based on student feedback, I was awarded the *Georgia Tech Class of 1940 Course Survey Teaching Effectiveness Award* in 2013 and 2014.

At the graduate level, I developed a brand new PhD seminar on special research topics related to IT Management (MGT 8803 – section TSG in Spring 2012 and section TSC in Spring 2015). In this course, I introduce students to relevant contemporary research in the field of information systems and to various analytical modeling tools and frameworks. Class sessions are very active, involving lecturing on my behalf, paper presentations by the students, and in-class exercises (where I literally get the students to the white board to solve problems). Students also have to complete several assignments which, in addition to following the material, require them to learn how to use Matlab to program simulations and build functions that will return numerical solutions to analytically-intractable optimization problems. Students also have to deliver a final paper (in the form of a research proposal) where they have to identify a relevant managerial problem, propose an analytical framework for it, and take initial steps to try to solve the market equilibrium. I want students, at the conclusion of the course, to be one step closer to being independent researchers. They can take the skills learned in this course and use them to conduct meaningful research for their PhD dissertation and beyond.

For all my courses, outside of the lecture, I make sure that I am easily reachable by my students. I often times accommodate meetings with students outside of regular office hours because I am well aware that students can have schedule conflicts. Moreover, I also welcome email communication and get back to my students very quickly.

In addition to lecturing, my involvement with the delivery of education at Georgia Tech manifested and continues to manifest on a number of additional dimensions. First, as mentioned in the introduction, I was recently appointed to serve on the Undergraduate Committee at Scheller College of Business and I am directly involved in the evaluation and approval of curriculum updates for all undergraduate concentrations at our college. Second, over the past few years, I participated (along with my colleagues) in the redesign of the curriculum for the ITM undergraduate concentration and certificate. Third, I have co-advised one ITM PhD student (German Retana) and served on three PhD dissertation committees. Fourth, I have been directly involved in the evaluation of the ITM PhD students during second year exams and first and second-year paper presentations.

Beyond engaging in curriculum design/evaluation or supporting students via teaching and supervision in the context of courses and degrees, I have been actively involved in student mentorship. For example, in 2014, I mentored a team of two undergraduate computer science students (Shyamak Aggarwal and Utkarsh Garg) who won the first place at the Innovation World 2014 Idea Contest organized by Software AG. The team's submission was a platform concept for crowdsourcing disaster relief and the award consisted of \$10,000 which went entirely to the students. I was also brought in to help with coaching the Scheller College of Business undergraduate team that participated in the 2014 Deloitte National Case Competition. On numerous occasions, I had chats with students about the career paths, job market positions/opportunities, and interview strategies. Also, whenever contacts from the industry reached out to me with job opportunities for students, I immediately passed that information to the students and to folks in the undergraduate office that coordinate recruiting efforts at Scheller College of Business.

At Tech, we have great resources and some of the best students in the world. As instructors, we have a big responsibility to ensure that these cohorts of bright students get the right education and support that will allow them to flourish and achieve great things further down the road. I embrace this challenge and find it very fulfilling to witness the personal and professional growth as well as the accomplishments of my students.

- Marius Florin Niculescu

Asst. Prof., IT Management, Scheller College of Business, Georgia Tech

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Illustration of Teaching Excellence and the Impact on Student Learning (page 1)

Course Instructor Opinion Survey (CIOS) Scores

Scale 1-5 (1: strongly disagree, 5: strongly agree)

Question/Statement (earlier it was CIOS item 10 but numbering has changed):

- (Spring 2010, Spring 2011): “The instructor was an effective teacher.”
- (Spring 2012, Spring 2013, Spring 2014): “Considering everything, the instructor was an effective teacher.”

Semester and Year	Course #	Course Name	Section #	Total Enrollment (TE)	Total Responses (TR)*	Response Rate (TR/TE)	Teaching Effectiveness**
Spring 2010	MGT 2200 (undergrad)	Information Technology	TS2 (20852)	70 (cap 75)	61	87.14%	4.6
Spring 2010	MGT 2200 (undergrad)	Information Technology	TS3 (25864)	72 (cap 75)	65	90.28%	4.4
Spring 2011	MGT 2200 (undergrad)	Information Technology	TS2 (20842)	72 (cap 75)	71	98.61%	4.7
Spring 2011	MGT 2200 (undergrad)	Information Technology	TS3 (25721)	73 (cap 75)	70	95.89%	4.6
Spring 2011	MGT 2200 (undergrad)	Information Technology	TS4 (30254)	72 (cap 75)	70	97.22%	4.7
Spring 2012	MGT 2200 (undergrad)	Information Technology	TS1 (21299)	55 (cap 65)	51	92.73%	4.73
Spring 2012	MGT 2200 (undergrad)	Information Technology	TS2 (20837)	62 (cap 65)	61	98.39%	4.72
Spring 2012	MGT 8803 (PhD)	Special Topics in MGT	TSG (25738)	3	2	66.67%	5
Spring 2012	MGT 9000 (PhD)	Doctoral Thesis	TSQ (26737)	1	1	100%	5
Spring 2013	MGT 2200 (undergrad)	Information Technology	TS3 (24074)	63 (cap 65)	59	93.65%	4.63
Spring 2013	MGT 2200 (undergrad)	Information Technology	TS4 (26920)	60 (cap 65)	53	88.33%	4.74
Spring 2013	MGT 2200 (undergrad)	Information Technology	TS5 (29334)	62 (cap 65)	56	90.32%	4.82
Spring 2014	MGT 2200 (undergrad)	Information Technology	TS3 (23739)	43 (cap 65)	37	86.05%	4.82
Spring 2014	MGT 2200 (undergrad)	Information Technology	TS4 (26267)	57 (cap 65)	52	91.23%	4.87
Spring 2014	MGT 2200 (undergrad)	Information Technology	TS5 (28177)	64 (cap 65)	58	90.63%	4.92
Weighted average of evaluation scores (accounting for the number of respondents)							4.70

* TR - This number represents the total number of students who answered the survey question on instructor teaching effectiveness. This may be smaller than the overall number of survey participants because, in some cases, students who participated did not answer that specific question.

** Interpolated median – Overall instructor teaching effectiveness. Prior to Fall 2011, scores were reported with a single decimal. Starting in Fall 2011, scores were reported with two decimals. I present these scores exactly as they were reported.

Illustration of Teaching Excellence and the Impact on Student Learning (page 2)

Examples of Student Comments from CIOS Surveys.

- “Dr. Niculescu is brilliant. His best attribute is that he is able to convey difficult concepts and material in a way that anyone can understand. I have never taken a business class before, and this was by far one of my favorite classes I have ever taken during my tenure at Georgia Tech. Both because the material was interesting, and because Dr. Niculescu is an incredible professor”
- “Dr. Niculescu is an incredible professor. He knows his material and can teach it extraordinarily. His slides are easy to comprehend and include many visuals which are great for teaching-with-slides in class. Most teachers just read directly from the slides and move on to the next one. Dr. Niculescu takes time to explain the material, discuss the images, and give current event examples.”
- “Very good class. I learned a lot and made my concentration IT purely based on this class.”
- “Course structure was fantastic! The powerpoints were very organized and helpful. All of the examples and video links online really helped the material stick. The homeworks were great at assessing and solidifying course knowledge.”
- “I enjoyed how applicable this course was. My father works in IT, but this was the first time I really understood what he does! I learned a great deal about this subject and found it to be extremely interesting.”
- “I enjoyed this course more than I thought I would. An incredibly fair and understanding teacher. Readily available to help and teaches well.”
- “He is a very engaging professor and his class notes were easy to follow and broken up into an appropriate curriculum load.”
- “Most organized teacher I have ever had. Very professional.”
- “He knew what he was doing and there was not one question that he could not answer. Very thorough, very funny, very informative.”
- “Overall a great course. I would recommend fellow business majors to take him. Even though Dr. Niculescu may be challenging, his course his fair and I'd rather take this course, learn a lot, and earn a B than take a different professor, not learn anything, and make an A.”
- “He was very good at keeping us on track, and making sure that we attended class and paid attention.”
- “He was awesome at communicating with his students. We would receive numerous announcements during the week to make sure we were keeping up with the class. He gave many relevant examples in class that made the material easier to learn.”
- “Professor Niculescu was extremely well-prepared. He took his lectures seriously and taught the material in a very straightforward, interesting way. It was very clear that he was knowledgeable about the subject.”
- “Thank you! I expected to take a really boring class just to fill my technology requirement and instead I took an interesting and engaging class about current issues and challenges in an arena of technology I had never studied before. Thank you for broadening my horizons.”
- “I found the data analysis and excel parts of the course to be very helpful.”
- “I enjoyed learning how to use Excel more. It is a very useful skill to have and he made sure we learned it.”
- “It helped me immensely that the professor uploaded all the slides for every class. The homework we did actually pertained not only to what we were learning in class but also used applications that we will use throughout our careers. I also enjoyed the videos that were on the powerpoint. They were visually engaging and often helped illustrate the information well.”
- “I feel much more confident in my knowledge of IT. I'm working at IBM this summer, and I am much more prepared to succeed in my internship.”
- “He is very good about meeting with students and is very available and approachable.”
- “He was the most well prepared and thorough teacher I had. He gave back tests day of and any question you had was answered almost immediately. He is also an engaging teacher that made class interesting.”
- “He was great! He truly cared about our class and our success. He also really wanted us to love IT just as he does.”
- “my favorite class so far at tech. also one of the most challenging, but still extremely interesting”
- “His lectures were very detailed and he always used examples to help students understand topics and concepts better. He always updated grades daily and returned assignments very quickly so students could see how well or poorly they were doing on a daily basis.”

Illustration of Teaching Excellence and the Impact on Student Learning (page 3)

Examples of Unsolicited Feedback from Students

- Eric Evans (MGT 2200 - Spring 2014), Thank a Teacher Email
“Thanks for truly caring for my success both in the classroom and out. You taught me many concepts in IT that helped with job applications and other classes. But mainly you were always there for any question I needed answering, or any encouragement along the way. Keep up what you are doing because you do make a positive impact on your students’ lives. I’ll see you in spring!”
- Will Showers (MGT 2200 - Spring 2014), Email on 5/3/2014
“I just wanted to thank you for a great semester in your class and let you know how much I enjoyed being a part of it. You made IT an exciting class and I've never had a professor as enthusiastic about teaching and be on top of things as much as you are, such as posting grades at midnight, revising slides late at night, or responding to emails very quickly. I really appreciate everything you've done this semester.”
- Caitlin Jolley (MGT 2200 - Spring 2014), Email on 3/24/2014
“I just wanted to shoot you a quick email because I just had a final phone interview with AT&T for an HR internship over the summer. I have no idea if I have been selected for the position, but this second interview would have been a complete failure if I were not in your class. AT&T HR works with a really large employee database, and they rely a lot on using excel for their business. One of the only 2 questions the hiring managers asked me was about specific functions in excel, particularly vlookup and pivot tables. I knew exactly what she was asking and was able to explain both functions to her in detail. She said that the description I gave was "exactly what [she] wanted to hear." Before your class, I had no idea what these functions were.
One of the reasons I love going to Tech is that professors are truly preparing students for success. Your instruction and homeworks in excel have helped me tremendously. Like I said, I don't even know if I've been selected for the position or not, but I was so excited about being able to answer her questions that I had to email you and show you my appreciation. Being able to answer an excel functionality question probably seems like a small thing, but I am immensely grateful to you and your class. What you and the other business professors are doing really has an impact on your students. “
- Anonymous student (MGT 2200 - Spring 2013), Thank a Teacher Email
“I have been at Georgia Tech for going on 5 semesters now, and your class is still one of, if not my absolute, favorite class at Tech. [...] in your class I was involved and interested. I felt like I learned a lot in your class and not just memorized chunks of information to pass your tests. You also taught more useful skills in your homework assignments and lectures such as Excel and MySQL which other classes lack to provide more practical application in life. You were also very helpful and understanding to all the students and treated us fairly and with good humor.
You only pushed me further in my concentration of choice, and I would definitely take any class you would teach. Whenever my friends ask if any has taken a class with you or are deciding between teachers, I automatically recommend they take your class because it'll be an experience they are unlikely to have with any other professor. Thank you again for everything you have done and having chosen to come to Georgia Tech.”
- David Carter Johnson Jr. (MGT 2200 - Spring 2011), Email on 5/26/2011
“I felt compelled to shoot you a quick e-mail, because I started my internship last week and after a brief period of seeing what goes on, I was thrown into the Accounting Department and put to work. Almost immediately upon arrival, I began to work with Crystal reports and Excel databases, and quickly found that everything we learned in IT this past semester has helped me keep a good pace, instead of being lost and having no idea what was going on. I have been able to consolidate databases, link tables, and use SQL queries to more accurately collect data in order to keep track of performance and keep costs down. I am very thankful that I took your class this past semester, as it is already been extremely beneficial for me.”

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Letter of Support: Colleague #1 (observed me in the classroom)



Eric Overby
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January 30, 2015

Dear Dr. Jordan and the Awards Committee:

I am delighted to provide this letter of support for **Dr. Marius (Florin) Niculescu** for the **CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award**. Since his arrival at Georgia Tech in 2009, I have worked closely with Florin (our offices are adjoining) on multiple initiatives and have observed him in the classroom. Given the close match between Florin's record and the selection criteria for the award, he is an exceptional candidate for this award.

Florin's teaching is innovative. Since joining Georgia Tech, he has substantially revamped one of the core courses (MGT 2200 – Information Technology Management) in the Scheller College undergraduate program. These innovations keep the course material cutting-edge and also respond to the changing needs of Scheller undergraduates. For example, one of the key deficiencies recently identified by recruiters of Scheller students is poor data manipulation skills. To address this concern, Florin developed in-depth assignments on Microsoft Excel and MySQL, and he has worked with other MGT 2200 instructors to make these a central component of the course. Student feedback has been exceptional, as illustrated in an e-mail from undergrad student Caitlin Jolley (included in the packet). Not only is Florin's teaching material innovative, but he also uses innovative methods for delivery, including the use of personal response devices to generate student participation engagement in the large classes that he teaches. Florin has also developed a new PhD seminar on analytical modeling, which fills a gap in Scheller's course offerings at the PhD level.

Florin makes a lasting impact on his students' lives, both in and beyond the classroom. One indicator of this is his mentorship of two undergraduate students, Shyamak Aggarwal (which was also a student in Florin's class) and Utkarsh Garg. Florin's guidance helped them win first place (including a \$10,000 award) at Software AG's Innovation World 2014 Idea Contest. This is remarkable for Florin's selflessness (this was well outside his normal duties) and for the impact the experience had on the students. It is also a great example of Florin's educational outreach beyond the classroom and laboratory. Another indicator of Florin's impact on students are the unsolicited e-mails he has received from former students commenting on how his teaching has helped them (examples included in the packet).

Florin is passionate about teaching and learning, and he is accessible to all students. I see this every week when the crowd of students gathers at Florin's office for office hours. Florin is passionate about making sure that his students understand the material and about helping them however he can. He keeps his course fresh by incorporating new, contemporary topics and designing supporting assignments, homeworks, and lecture materials. His passion for students is evidenced by the consistently positive CIOS comments he receives.

Florin is an expert on the economics of information technology and competitive strategy in the software industry, and he connects his teaching to his research. For example, a topic in Florin's class is software company business models, including the "freemium" model in which a software company provides the basic version for free but charges for advanced features. Florin has conducted extensive research on questions such as when companies should offer "freemium" vs. more conventional offerings. When discussing business models for software in class, Florin brings a depth of understanding to the topic that his students would not get from any other instructor.

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Florin has displayed teaching excellence in core classes, required classes, and large classes. He teaches a core class that is required for all Scheller College undergraduates (MGT 2200), consistently achieving CIOS scores in the 4.6-4.9 range with excellent response rates. These scores are exceptional for a required course, given that Florin must engage with all students, including those who do not have an inherent interest in the subject matter. His courses typically have 60-70 students, which is very large and close to capacity for the Scheller college (for reference, the maximum number of students in most undergraduate classes at Scheller is 75 due to building constraints).

Florin is also an excellent Georgia Tech citizen. He has served on Scheller's IT committee and undergraduate committee, served as a judge in student competitions, participated heavily in faculty and PhD student recruiting, and represented the faculty in multiple commencement ceremonies.

In closing, Florin is an outstanding teacher and is highly deserving of the award. Please let me know if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,



Eric Overby
Associate Professor
Scheller College of Business
Georgia Institute of Technology

CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award – Nomination Packet: MARIUS FLORIN NICULESCU

Letter of Support: Colleague #2

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to recommend **Marius Florin Niculescu** for the **CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award**. I have known Florin for a little over two years as a colleague in the Scheller College where we have worked together to improve our ITM (information technology management) undergraduate curriculum and the extracurricular activities available to students in our concentration and at large. I have worked with many junior tenure track faculty members during my 20 years in the profession but very few have been as persistently determined to improve the educational experience of their students, and as effective, as Florin Niculescu.

Florin has been involved intimately with the redesign of our ITM concentration and certificate curricula. He is an unending source of ideas regarding coverage of materials in courses, new courses, and activities in which we could get our students involved. He is a sounding board for and articulate constructive critic of proposals that affect our students. Florin's influence has profoundly shaped the new curricula, which will serve our students better by being more closely linked to the demands of employers while more firmly grounding students in the basic skills and knowledge of our field. However, Florin is not just a planner, he's also good in the classroom.

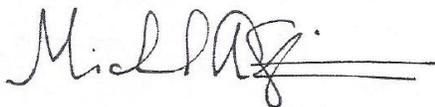
Florin addresses the great challenge of keeping students engaged in MGT 2200 (Management Information Systems), a required course of large sections for business students, by re-prepping each semester to introduce coverage of the latest innovations, current business cases, and relevant research—knowledge that helps our students stand out when they are interviewing for internships and permanent positions. Along with his use of Turningpoint “clickers” to give immediate feedback from in-class quizzes, this keeps his courses interactive and interesting. As well, Florin has taken it upon *himself* to improve our students' preparation for the larger world by introducing Excel and SQL exercises into his course—again, differentiators that help our students in the job market.

Florin goes out of his way to be helpful to his students. I have seen him cut lunch short or eat at his desk many times to make sure he keeps his office hours and, when he's in, his door is usually open anyway. Furthermore, his extensive use of T-Square enables students to access presentations from past class meetings, additional interesting material, and their grades throughout the term, which helps them keep up and know where they stand. His competence and dedication, as well as his challenging but friendly and supportive manner in the classroom, are reflected in his excellent evaluations. But Florin realizes that there is more to an education than what is delivered in the classroom.

Florin is an avid supporter of the MIS club, the organization for students in the ITM concentration. He passes news of interesting events and job opportunities to and from the club and encourages the officers to make announcements regarding opportunities to his students. He encourages students to sign up for the club and concentration listservs to keep up with news as well. He also has helped judge cases in the preliminary round of our internal business case competition, which is a major initiative in our area undertaken to help prepare our students better for the working world.

In conclusion, Florin works for our students in both curriculum planning and delivery. He is an engaging and accessible educator who goes out of his way to help students in his classes and outside. His actions have had a direct impact on the qualification of our students for the internship and full time positions they seek. Finally, Florin is just a pleasure to be with. He's witty, well-read with wide interests, and friendly—while having been recognized as an excellent researcher. His presence on our faculty is a real credit to the Institute. It is an honor and a pleasure to recommend such an excellent colleague for this award. If you have questions about my recommendation of Florin Niculescu for the CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award, please contact me at mike.smith@scheller.gatech.edu or by phone at 404.894.3192.

Sincerely,



Michael A. Smith, PhD

Full Time Lecturer, Information Technology Management, Scheller College of Business, Georgia Tech

CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award – Nomination Packet: MARIUS FLORIN NICULESCU

Letter of Support: Former Student #1 (Management, undergraduate)

This letter is to support Dr. Marius Florin Niculescu's nomination for the CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award. I am now a senior in my graduating semester, and Dr. Niculescu still stands as the most influential professor I had at my time at Tech. When coming to Tech, I had so many interests that I was unsure where to specialize. My second year, I switched my major to business and was having difficulty choosing a concentration. I thought I wanted to go into marketing until I took his class, MGT 2200, which drove me to minor in the Denning Technology & Management Computing & Business program to be able to communicate effectively between business and technical teams (which I learned was an issue in this class, and I saw first hand in my first IT-related job), and now I have now begun to explore careers in business analytics. In the future, I intend to pursue further education, combining my newfound passion for IT, analytics, and nutrition, and I can honestly say my IT/analytics interest fully developed because of Dr. Niculescu.

In class, I learned the importance of well-structured IT in supporting the modern enterprise, and that while IT is no guarantee for competitive advantage, effective IT can lead to serious competitive advantage. Dr. Niculescu went into detail about the benefits and risks of cloud computing, the economics and appropriate use cases of freemium-model businesses (an area in which he also conducts research), the true definition and meaning of "added value," network and longtail effects, an AMAZING introduction to SQL and MySQL that made all my subsequent SQL-related classes a breeze, and a variety of other topics that contributed to my understanding of IT and business in a holistic sense. I feel that I learned more about general business in this one class than I did across my career at Tech, because Dr. Niculescu always made everything relevant. I was being taught business intuition and how to think strategically. Each subsequent business class I took was easier because his class covered so much ground and yet was somehow in enough depth to actually be meaningful. I felt like I learned through osmosis because I was just so engaged in every class—when a professor is enthusiastic, it's hard not to be engaged. With each class I better understood business in general in addition to IT, and the way he related everything to a bigger picture is what truly made me want to specialize in IT.

Dr. Niculescu's physical energy, speaking cadence, confidence, natural authority, and his expert-level understanding of the subject matter made each class worthwhile and engaging. My peers were also engaged and clearly respected him. Effort exerted was proportionate to success. He was very passionate and referred to his research in class (making him a clear subject-matter expert, and also more relatable), and was exceptionally accessible. At the end of class, he would look prepared to talk to students rather than look like he wanted to leave, and I saw him spend time with many students who had questions. He used clicker data to derive implications about the students' understanding of the class and material pacing, and he took classroom feedback and deployed it immediately. He was prompt in responding to my emails and questions, and I really felt like he valued my success. The level of his respect and caring for students was unreal, and while I have since had some outstanding professors in my 5 years at Tech, I still maintain that Professor Niculescu is at the top of my list because of that intuitive element in his instruction that tied everything together, and because of his direct influence on my life path.

Victoria Arnold
Business Administration - senior; ITM Concentration

CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award – Nomination Packet: MARIUS FLORIN NICULESCU

Letter of Support: Former Student #2 (Industrial Engineering, undergraduate)

Support Letter for Prof. Marius Florin Niculescu for CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award

When I was accepted at Georgia Tech as an engineering student, the expectation I had for my education was high in terms of curriculum and professors. Each semester I had the opportunity to learn from great professors who are experts in their respective fields, helping me to fulfill my intellectual curiosity and improve my problem solving capabilities. Dr. Niculescu was one of these great professors and much more.

Dr. Niculescu's MGT 2200 class was my first class from the College of Business, and I was hesitant about what to expect from a business class in an engineering school. Today I am happy to say that taking this class was one of the best decisions I made at this university. Dr. Niculescu not only is an expert in his field, but also approachable and passionate, making him an outstanding educator. During his class, he put great effort in communicating concepts into simple and understandable terms. He made use of slides to reinforce his explanations, and engaged students by showing company case videos or asking clicker questions. He always tried to combine business ideas with technical concepts in order to teach students demandable skills. For example, I learned about Association Analysis, a concept that was fundamental to understand in my internship with Infosys. Moreover, Dr. Niculescu always made himself available for students looking for advanced explanations (such as mathematical proofs) as well as for students looking to understand basic material (such as elementary SQL). Thanks to his class and teaching, I became motivated to pursue a career that makes use of the combination between technology and business.

Dr. Niculescu and I kept in touch after that class by meeting in his office or for some coffee. As an engineering student, I am always glad to learn from an expert who knows how business works and how technology can be implemented in order to enhance it. Since I communicated to him my career aspirations and other ideas, he has showed support and even recommended me what steps I should take in order to achieve my goals. We talked about what are the most interesting career paths in IT and what skills will be needed the most in the next years. We also talked about new business phenomena such as Crowdsourcing and Big Data Analytics. He was one of the first people I let know about my full-time job offer in the area of digital consulting.

I have nothing but very high appreciation for a professor that takes valuable time to meet a student and acts as a mentor. That is why Dr. Niculescu is definitely one of the most influential teachers I had at Georgia Tech. I believe that the College of Business made a great choice by hiring Dr. Niculescu, so I hope it keeps hiring professors like him.

Dr. Niculescu's knowledge, passion, and eagerness to impact students' lives makes him great candidate for the CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award.

Guido Lombardo
Georgia Institute of Technology
Senior Industrial Engineering Student – Quality & Statistics
Business Analytics Certificate

CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award – Nomination Packet: MARIUS FLORIN NICULESCU

Letter of Support: Former Student #3 (IT Management, PhD)

Dear CETL Awards Committee,

It gives me great pleasure to write this letter to support Professor Marius Florin Niculescu's nomination for the CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award. I took Professor Niculescu's Ph.D. seminar in modeling methods during Spring 2012. This course was memorable because of Professor Niculescu's unique, innovative, and outstanding teaching. He was extremely detailed in his seminar where he taught us several unique methods for modeling phenomena in social sciences. Though this course was difficult, Professor Florin gave us multiple assignments and readings through which we could gradually build our foundation in this course. Professor Niculescu effectively communicated difficult technical concepts to us students, in an elegant and simple manner. He made us solve several theoretical and programming assignments which included computer based simulations of mathematical models. Professor Niculescu's Ph.D. seminar helped students to develop their own original ideas based on unique modeling methods taught in class. For me, personally this was a chance to develop my idea into a research paper.

Complementing his unique teaching was the consideration for his students' development. Professor Niculescu thoroughly and patiently addressed any doubts I had. He would repeatedly ensure the class was fully prepared and understood these difficult concepts. Several times he shared source code from his own research and worked with us on debugging our Matlab programs. His caring behavior and interest in teaching the material also created an environment for us students to engage in discussions and interactions with him and with guest speakers. I found his teaching method and his energetic personality effective and inspiring. As a result, I worked hard and attained the highest possible score in all assignments and the final course –while developing my own research idea.

I was also the teaching assistant to Professor Niculescu during Spring 2012 for MGT 2200, the undergraduate core course in Information Technology Management at Scheller College of Business. I followed his teaching closely including the assignments given to undergraduate students. Professor Niculescu was a committed instructor who went above and beyond to ignite a greater interest for the IT field in his students. Firstly, he provided multiple resources for students to enhance their understanding of the IT field. Secondly, Professor Niculescu focused on discussing new, innovative, and technological concepts and upcoming trends. This provided his students with the ability to learn and understand difficult IT concepts. While multiple instructors teach MGT 2200, he redesigned the course significantly, and, taught it to over 500 students over the past few years. Prof. Niculescu has always been reachable and available to interact with the students beyond the classroom. Over the years, students (both current and alumni) approached him for both technical and career advice.

Personally, I also have collaborated with Prof. Niculescu on co-editing the email newsletter for the ITM group (which was sent to over 3000 individuals in the academic and industry communities). I have found him to be extremely organized in the process, and he guided me appropriately through the project, without putting a strain on my time. Similarly, Professor Niculescu's advice helped me in my career decisions as well as in my research. He has always encouraged me to reach for higher goals. Professor Niculescu, invited me to present my research at two international academic conferences. These opportunities gave great visibility to my research and played a very important role in getting multiple job offers in a highly competitive market.

Over the years, Professor Niculescu's dedication to research and teaching has shown the way for many students, including me. Professor Niculescu is one of those rare teachers who can teach with equal ease at the undergraduate and at the Ph.D. level. I am very confident that he will carry the spirit of Georgia Tech through his career. I whole heartedly wish that the CETL awards committee considers his nomination favorably, and recognizes him for his hard work and dedication.

Thank you for your consideration.



Hemang C Subramanian

PhD Candidate, Information Technology Management, Scheller College of Business, Georgia Tech

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Date: 30-Jan-2015

CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award – Nomination Packet: MARIUS FLORIN NICULESCU

Letter of Support: Former Student #4 (Management, undergraduate)

January 26, 2015

Re: CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award Recommendation Letter for Professor Marius Niculescu

To Whom It May Concern:

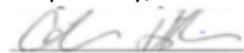
I am writing to give my highest recommendation to Professor Marius Niculescu for the CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award. I was a student under Professor Niculescu in his Spring 2013 Management of Information Systems course (MGT 2200). Niculescu is an exceptional professor who I regard both as a mentor and a professor I can always discuss any topic with, whether professional, academic, or personal. As a double-major in business administration and international affairs, I have encountered numerous professors during my time at Georgia Tech. Of these encounters, Niculescu is indisputably the professor that has made the most impact on my studies and passion for learning throughout my entire undergraduate career.

Any student or professor who encounters Niculescu will quickly observe that he demonstrates a robust passion and care for education. He is always ensuring that students are actively learning and understanding the application of his lessons both inside and outside of class hours. Professor Niculescu commands the classroom with his deep knowledge and ability to challenge as well as nurture a wide range of students' academic capabilities. During class, he consistently led informed discussions with the ability to motivate and encourage students that were weaker in particular subject matters. Niculescu specifically went above and beyond his duties as a professor when myself and three other Georgia Tech students were selected to compete in the Deloitte National Case Competition last spring. He kindly took time out of his schedule to share his knowledge and coach our business case analysis skills. I am firmly persuaded that without his tutelage and insight, our team would not have performed as well as we did.

Events like this exhibit Professor Niculescu's natural compassion for teaching through his dedication to going above and beyond for his students. He is efficient, organized, and is a figure of guidance for students at Georgia Tech. Even a year after taking his course, I still hear frequent positive comments about Niculescu as a professor and mentor.

It is very rare to find professors on large campuses who can personally influence you to the extent that Professor Niculescu has. He adds immeasurable value through his teaching, research, and mentorship both in the Scheller College of Business and the Georgia Tech community as a whole. I simply cannot think of a more deserving candidate for this award.

Respectfully,



Gillen R. Heisler

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CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award – Nomination Packet: MARIUS FLORIN NICULESCU

Letter of Support: Former Student #5 (Computer Science, undergraduate)

To whom it may concern:

My first interaction with Professor Marius Florin Niculescu was in Spring 2014 when I took his class, MGT 2200, Information Technology (Intro to MIS). On the very first day, when he introduced himself and went over the course curriculum, I was a bit apprehensive about my decision to register for a course different from normal CS courses I usually take. When I expressed my concern to him after the class, he said “This course might look now a bit easy and unconventional to a CS major, but over time you will be introduced to a different side of IT, where you would start looking at things from a managerial perspective”. And today, it is one of the best courses I’ve taken at Tech. This course showed me a new way to perceive changes in technological world and critique new and upcoming technologies from both development as well as industry point-of-view. In fact, this class triggered a new side in me, where my outlook changed from getting a developer job in a software company to that of potentially becoming an entrepreneur eager to set up my own startup. The course material covered all the new technologies and introduced some unfamiliar concepts, but in an easy-to-understand manner. I give the whole credit to Professor Niculescu, who designed the course to be informative, exciting and worthwhile. The way the course was structured, always allowed me to ease into different concepts even when they were outside the domain of computing.

As a professor, Dr. Niculescu has all the qualities that one would expect from an exemplary teacher. Always right on time, he used to come to class prepared every day, so that not even one minute of class time is wasted. Such kind of discipline and commitment to his work inspired me and stimulated my, and I believe others’ too, interest in the course. He has always been respectful towards us and really helpful, whether with homework assignments, midterms, or final exam. His resourcefulness and easy accessibility allowed me to excel in the class and get the desired results. He has been truly an exceptional professor to me.

On a personal level, I have been fortunate to have him as a mentor for my project. During Spring 2014, I, together with another student, participated in the First International Student Idea Contest which was part of the Innovation World 2014 Conference organized by Software AG, where we developed an idea from scratch (a concept for a platform for crowdsourcing disaster relief) and had to formulate a go-to-market strategy. One day, after class, I asked Prof. Niculescu if he could help me with my project and he gave me an hour from his busy schedule and helped me. With time, I kept seeking his advice for my project, and this interaction grew to an involved mentoring level where he himself suggested scheduling bi-weekly meetings so as to keep our work in progress and get the adequate resources and help. He also accepted to be the official academic mentor for our team. On various occasions, he also referred us to other professors whenever he felt we needed to be critiqued by someone expert in their field. This just goes to show the team player quality in Professor Niculescu, encouraging us to contact other professors who can better help us with a particular question. In the end, we got the first place at this international competition. Looking back, I don’t think we would have been able to submit such a high-quality project for the competition without his support.

I sincerely believe that Professor Niculescu deserves the CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award; he is an excellent professor, a great gentleman, and has been an amazing mentor to me. I wish him all the best!

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