



School of Civil and Environmental Engineering

January 28, 2014

Dear CETL Honors Award Committee,

It is my pleasure to nominate Kari Watkins for the CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award. As Dr. Watkins often says, “teaching is an activity that takes place both in and outside the classroom.” Her passion for students is evident throughout her undergraduate teaching, graduate teaching, and student mentoring.

With regard to undergraduate teaching, Dr. Watkins’ is one of three faculty members that have been teaching Capstone Senior Design for the past 2.5 years since her arrival at Georgia Tech. She is dedicated to teaching this course because she believes it is her best opportunity to help prepare our graduates for the real world. The load from this course is tremendous for an Assistant Professor, including guiding students in the preparation of a Statement of Qualifications, recruiting semester-long projects from sponsors, advising 16 – 20 student teams, and traveling to final presentations across the southeast. As the final week of the course arrives and students are nervously preparing for their presentations, I have witnessed Dr. Watkins staying until late into the evening to work with students. Capstone is also a vital course for our ABET accreditation and therefore includes substantial paperwork and planning outside the classroom. Clearly, our department has a great deal of confidence in her skills to allow Dr. Watkins to teach such an important course as a young untenured faculty member.

Since arriving at Georgia Tech, Dr. Watkins has also made an incredible impact by bringing multimodal transportation concepts into our curriculum. She has developed three new graduate courses and substantial modules for several undergraduate courses on transit planning and operations and complete streets design. The Transit Planning and Operations course she developed is one of the most popular transportation courses, drawing students from multiple departments. In addition to her own teaching load, Dr. Watkins often volunteers to lecture on these topics in other courses to make sure that students obtain the exposure that they need for their future careers.

Dr. Watkins’ passion for teaching extends well beyond the classroom. She has advised thirteen masters and five PhD students in her short time at Georgia Tech and all of these students have raved about how much she cares about their education and their future careers. Dr. Watkins uses her vast personal network to help students find internships and permanent positions upon graduation; and her students remain in close contact with her following graduation to increasingly become part of that network. At the undergraduate level, she has worked with multiple PURA awardees, a SURE student, and is preparing to host her second exchange student through a program CEE is starting with France. All of this is evidenced by the shelf in her office, lined with thank you notes from her former students, and the hugs she receives whenever an alumnus comes to visit.

Finally, her teaching efforts have reached beyond Georgia Tech. Dr. Watkins has obtained funding from our regional university transportation center, STRIDE, for developing public transportation course materials to be disseminated for multiple universities to begin teaching stand-alone transit courses and modules in introductory

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transportation courses. She has also been asked to speak about her teaching efforts related to bicycle and pedestrian transportation at the Transportation Research Board annual meeting. For her continued teaching efforts, Dr. Watkins received our school's Bill Schutz Junior Faculty Teaching Award in 2013.

I therefore strongly recommend Dr. Watkins for this award. If you have any questions about my recommendation, please contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Reginald DesRoches".

Reginald DesRoches
Karen and John Huff Professor and Chair

Reflective Statement

Professors must combine many qualities to be good teachers. Curriculum must be carefully designed to teach critical technical and non-technical skills. Students must be mentored via one-on-one interactions and lab group meetings to learn the process of conducting research and to aid their growth to professionals in industry or academia. Finally, teaching requires a person who can keep the students engaged and encouraged in their pursuit of knowledge. I enjoy having the chance to guide future fellow engineers and influence not only their perceptions of Civil Engineering, but also their ability to make an impact on the world. This statement describes my efforts to educate students in my specific field of transportation and technology, through Civil Engineering's very successful Capstone program, and outside the classroom through mentoring of students.

Transportation and Technology

A major focus of mine has been educating students about transit planning and operations, design for cyclists and pedestrians, and the use of technology to improve the transportation system. I have developed new materials for four courses in these areas, Multimodal Transportation (CEE 4610), Introduction to Travel Demand Forecasting, Intelligent Transportation and the Internet, and Transit Planning and Operations (CEE 6642). Each of these courses have involved careful design of curriculum, multiple real-world aspects, and my own teaching style that I hope shows evidence of my enthusiasm both for my field and for my students education.

For the **Transit Planning and Operations** course, I received a \$70,000 grant from STRIDE to produce a set of public transportation course modules for both this course and the Introduction to Transportation (undergraduate senior course). The graduate course aims to provide a solid understanding of public transportation systems and is designed to be easily applied by instructors with limited experience in the transit industry. The modules were developed and taught at Georgia Tech and Auburn through a process that included researching applicable literature, interviewing educators and practitioners, and mind mapping the core concepts needed for transportation practice. Materials will be disseminated to course instructors around the world via a website for use in their own courses. Here at Georgia Tech, I have taught this course once and will continue to teach it every spring semester.

In addition to transit planning and operations, I have developed materials for three other courses. **Introduction to Travel Demand Forecasting** serves as an introduction to the process used to estimate the demand for transportation infrastructure. The goal is to give students general exposure to the steps involved in travel demand modeling; the theory and practice behind calculations at each step; as well as shortcomings, future directions and usage. The course includes a substantial lab component, because this work requires hands-on experience with an actual working model from a Metropolitan Planning Organization. Both the content and format of the course were very well received. The course was taught once by me and my materials are being reused by a post doc to teach it again this semester (Spring 2014).

Multimodal Transportation (CEE 4610) was redesigned to be the second major undergraduate transportation course, covering the necessity of multimodality in passenger and freight transportation. The course has not been taught for many years and was completely redone. I co-developed this new curriculum with one other instructor, with my components revolving around passenger multimodality (complete streets design, pedestrian and bicycle planning and design, transit planning and operations,

traffic calming and context sensitive solutions). The course was taught for the first time in the fall and will continue to be taught every fall semester.

Intelligent Transportation and the Internet examines IT technology and policy in transportation, as the internet plays a greater role in transportation information and data. Topics include intelligent transportation systems, public-private partnerships, the evolving role of traffic management, vehicle-to-vehicle networks, and standards-setting. The course was developed as a component of a GDOT / NCTSPM project, was taught once in fall and will be modified to be taught as continuing education or modules of other Georgia Tech courses.

Capstone Senior Design Course

Finally, I have repeatedly co-taught the capstone senior design course, providing senior CEE students with hands-on engineering experience. I had taught senior design previously in two other places and it is simply my favorite undergrad course. I think a proper transition from typical academic coursework is vitally important for graduating students prior to entering the real-world. Although the structure of senior design was well thought-out when I arrived, I think I have added to the format and carried on teaching a very involved course that is a critical component of the curriculum.

In our Capstone course, the students self-select into groups and immediately begin to develop professional resumes and a corporate identity to respond to a real Request for Qualifications (RFQ) that has been issued by a local agency. By using a team of graders representing industry, the faculty and the agency issuing the RFQ, the student groups are ranked to determine an order in which they will chose their semester-long projects. The 16 – 20 semester-long projects are assembled through weeks of communicating with potential sponsors, who have previously been involved in the process and have agreed to work with the students throughout the semester. My co-instructor and I also meet with each student group on at least a weekly basis to answer questions or identify additional needed resources needed to complete their work (guidebooks or other professors at Georgia Tech). After a semester of working on their projects to produce a design plan, the students present these final products to their sponsors on site rather than just in the classroom. The final projects are again graded by an outside consulting firm, the project sponsor, the instructors and a faculty panel.

I have co-instructed this course every fall and spring semester since I arrived and took the lead in Fall 2012 and 2013, including the RFQ process and identifying projects. My involvement in the course has lead to numerous positive interactions with Georgia Tech alumni and local companies.

Student Mentoring

Beyond the classroom, I think that proper mentoring of students is critical not only to the research process, but also in grooming future professionals. The past two and half years, I have worked to establish my research group at Georgia Tech, known as the Urban Transportation Information Lab, from which I will have graduated 10 MS students solely advised by me with 2 additional MS students and 2 PhD students soon to follow. I spend much of my time working with my graduate students, providing them guidance and support on research design, analysis, technical writing, presentation skills, and job search advice.

Teaching Evaluations

Semester	Course			Size	Effectiveness Score	% Course taught
Undergraduate						
Fall 2011	CEE	4090	A	~ 40	Not added to CIOS	30%
Spring 2012	CEE	4090	A / IP	99	4.74	30%
Fall 2012	CEE	4090	A	67	4.71	70%
Spring 2013	CEE	4090	A / IP	88	4.58	30%
Fall 2013	CEE	4090	A	48	4.73	70%
Fall 2013	CEE	4610	A	33	4.57	50%
Spring 2014	CEE	4090	A		In progress	30%
Graduate						
Fall 2011	CEE	6602	A	~ 40	4.33	30%
Spring 2012	CEE	8813	O	11	4.75	100%
Spring 2013	CEE	6642	A	39	4.85	100%
Fall 2013	CEE / PubP	8813 / 8803	I / HK	12	4.73	50%
Spring 2014	CEE	6642	A		In progress	100%

CEE 4090 – Capstone Design

Selected comments from the question “What was the greatest strength?” appear below. Comments were only removed for repetition.

- Previous knowledge on what to expect from sponsors. Overall knowledge of civil engineering concepts. Knew who to put us in contact with if extra assistance was needed.
- Dr. Watkins is extremely approachable and easy to talk to, and was a great source of information through the entire project as a result.
- Passionate and cares about the students
- Dr. Watkins was a great instructor. It was obvious she is passionate about what she does. It was great to have her work with us the week of presentations. She was available most anytime I needed to speak with her.
- I think she's a real asset to GT.
- She is extremely approachable and really an awesome person. Definitely one of the standout parts of the course. She is also always available! Well, almost always. But enough to make her more so than any other teacher in the history of teachers at Ga Tech.
- Very friendly and always willing to help and lend a hand with projects.
- highly available and very helpful; incredibly enthusiastic; very straight forward about what it would take to succeed.
- Communicating and helping each group equally
- Excellent source for information or pointing out the right direction if we needed help.
- Very concerned for students to succeed.
- Dr. Watkins is enthusiastic and is always smiling. She definitely feels approachable and is obviously knowledgeable about many subjects in Civil Engineering. I think her experience is a great fit for senior design.

CEE 4610 – Multimodal Transportation

Selected comments from the question “What was the greatest strength?” appear below. Comments were only removed for repetition.

- She is very passionate about her line of work and definitely knows what it takes to have a cohesive city network, having lived in the Pacific NW.
- Her enthusiasm and background in the subject matter.
- Strong knowledge of the material and great enthusiasm. Made the class session interactive, and had the right tone of voice (not flat) which helped in keeping students alert since the class period was an hour and thirty minutes long

CEE 6602 – Transportation Planning

My first semester at GT, I team taught this course with two others. I taught about 1/3 of the lectures, but I was added to the CIOS system late, because I was the third instructor. However, a few students who filled out the evaluation late were still able to grade my performance. For this course, I received one response to the question “What was the greatest strength?” that praised my enthusiasm and fresh perspective. A more telling comment is perhaps what was said to “What was the most needed improvement?” to which the only response was, “Teach more. I enjoyed your lectures.”

CEE 8813 – Introduction to Travel Demand Forecasting

When asked about my greatest strength, students said:

- Passion for the subject matter. You could see in her teaching how much she cared about what she was teaching and how much she cared about continuing to learn about it.
- She is very concerned about making sure that everyone understands the material.
- Interest, enthusiasm, availability
- She was very enthusiastic about the topic and made sure to clarify anything that the students were confused about.
- Very enthusiastic and always willing to adjust teaching style as needed. Very accessible for assistance and provided a sound basis for the material
- Dr. Watkins is very enthusiastic about teaching and it shows. She's always prepared for lectures and really tries to make sure that everyone is understanding the material.

In addition, the students' answers to “What was the best aspect?” clearly demonstrate that the thought we put behind the design of the course was very well received.

- It was great how hands-on this course was with the models themselves. The combination of simple lecture examples and practical applications in lab was very helpful.
- Excellent course structure walking through the four steps with additional information interspersed throughout. Assignments matched up with the weekly lectures and reading and added new skills each time. Quizzes tested our grasp of that weekly information and all of the information from the class was utilized for the final project. Was probably the best structure of a class that I can remember.

CEE 6642 – Transit Planning and Operations

Selected comments from the question “What was the greatest strength?” appear below. Comments were only removed for repetition.

- Very sweet, approachable, and knowledgeable. Made you fall in love with the topic because she was so passionate about it.
- This was Dr. Watkins passion, and it showed. Very enthusiastic about the subject material and in attempting to relay that information to students.
- enthusiasm in the subject matter was infectious. i couldn't help but get excited about transit every day i had class. dr watkins has a rare combination of ability to inspire, tremendous depth of knowledge, and kindness. i truly admire her.
- Her ability to actively engage with the class. The comfortable feel you got while in her class, in terms of learning as if a friend was teaching you; this is very rare from a professor since the majority of the time it feels as if the professor is above the student, always talking down, or explaining material in a way that is not easily grasped by the students. Not Dr. Watkins. She can relate to the students, and project her knowledge directly by making a familiar connection first.
- important topic, very well done especially for the first time teaching the course and with the difficult mix of grads and undergrads together in a class. the course covered an impressive amount of material. The professor's passion for the material comes out in the lectures making 90 minute class periods much easier to sit through.
- Dr. Watkins showed genuine concern for students, was reflective on her teaching, showed humility, was approachable, and showed sincere interest and enthusiasm in the teaching of this course.

CEE 8813 – Intelligent Transportation and the Internet

Selected comments from the question “What was the greatest strength?” appear below. Comments were only removed for repetition.

- Dr. Watkins greatest strength is her ability to connect with her students and her knowledge.
- I think Dr. Watkins is a phenomenal professor. Her lectures were well structured and she was very good at guiding the discussions. I also think that she cares a lot of her students interests.
- Very enthusiastic and knows what she is talking about in each topic. It was great that sessions were based on research projects she had done and the visual support (slides) really helped

Letters of Support

- Dr. Michael Rodgers, with whom I have co-taught Capstone every semester and more recently Multimodal Transportation
- Dr. Randall Guensler, with whom I co-taught Transportation Planning in my first semester
- James Wong, my first MS advisee who also took my Transit course
- Margaret Carragher, my second MS advisee who also took multiple courses with me
- Jonathon DiGioia, who took Transit and Capstone as an undergrad and then became an MS advisee of mine
- Katelyn Randall, who took Capstone as an undergrad and is currently enrolled in Transit
- An unsolicited email from Donald Sheldon, an undergrad who took my Capstone course



School of Civil and Environmental Engineering

January 28, 2014

Dr. Joyce Weinsheimer, Chair
Selection Committee for Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award
Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning
Office of the Associate Vice President for Learning Excellence
Campus

Dear Dr. Weinsheimer:

This correspondence is in support of the nomination of **Dr. Kari Watkins** for the *CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award*. At Georgia Tech, I am called upon to write many letters of recommendation but I cannot remember having an easier letter than this to write. To put it succinctly, Dr. Watkins is the *best teacher among our junior faculty and is among the top-five that I have seen in my more than thirty-five years at Georgia Tech*. Let me tell you why I believe this. I first met Dr. Watkins when she was interviewing for her current position. Almost immediately I recognized that she was a “keeper”, that is a young faculty member who would be both an outstanding teacher and a successful researcher and scholar. In many regards she is an “old school” professor: one that has a true *passion* for teaching and does not regard her teaching time in and out of the classroom as an “obligation” or as a “necessary evil”.

Since her arrival, I have had the privilege of co-teaching with her on a number of occasions for both *Multimodal Transportation* and *Senior Capstone Design*. The latter assignment is very significant and, I believe, reflects the School’s view of her teaching ability. A former School Chair (and now President of a major university) once told me:

“A good engineering curriculum is built like a house; you start with a “cornerstone” and end with a “capstone” with a bunch of “other stuff” between. You do what you must to get the “other stuff” taught but you never go with less than your *best* for the ends.”

It should be noted that Dr. Watkins has been the *only* junior faculty member over the last fifteen years to be assigned to teach our *Senior Capstone Design* course. I believe that is strong reflection of the regard with which the whole of the Civil and Environmental Engineering faculty regard her teaching skills. All I can say is that there is no one I would rather teach with. She has a tireless work ethic and a dedication to, and a genuine affection for, her students that is very rare today. I give her my highest possible recommendation for this award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Michael O. Rodgers".

Michael O. Rodgers, Ph.D.
Adjunct Professor and Principal Research Scientist
&
GTRI *Technical Fellow* and Principal Research Scientist
Georgia Tech Research Institute

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School of Civil and Environmental Engineering

January 30, 2014

Reggie DesRoches, PhD.
Chair, School of Civil and Environmental Engineering
Georgia Institute of Technology
790 Atlantic Drive
Atlanta, GA 30332-0355

Junior Faculty Teaching Award
Recommendation Letter for Kari Watkins

It is my pleasure to provide this letter of recommendation for Kari Watkins as a nominee for the CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Award. Kari has dedicated herself to undergraduate and graduate teaching activities since arriving Georgia Tech in 2011. Even though she was not required to teach during her first semester here, she dove right in, co-teaching the capstone senior design course. She has been moving at high speed ever since, and the quality of her work is excellent.

Kari has been instrumental in the successful implementation of the CEE Capstone Senior Design course. She has co-taught this course every fall and spring since arriving at Georgia Tech. Kari began taking the course lead in Fall 2012. This course is one of the most important courses taught in Civil and Environmental Engineering, providing our seniors with a hands-on engineering project experience. Kari is helping transition our students from typical academic coursework into their future employment activities via this practical, real-world engineering experience. Her work in this course has also helped raise the visibility of CEE through the partnerships she has forged between CEE, Georgia Tech alumni, and local companies and agencies that facilitate the projects and participate in project evaluation. Student reviews of her capstone place her performance as an effective teacher at better than 4.5 ... every single semester.

With respect to graduate course development, Kari's main focus has been on transit planning and operations, transportation systems design for livable cities, and technology applications to improve alternative mode utility. Over the past two years she has taught Multimodal Transportation (CEE 4610), Transit Planning and Operations (CEE 6642), Introduction to Travel Demand Forecasting (CE 8811 New Course Offering), and Intelligent Transportation and the Internet (CE8811, New Course Offering). Each of these courses has involved significant development of new curriculum. Kari recently received \$70,000 in funding from the STRIDE southeast Regional University Transportation Center to develop a set of public transportation course modules. Her course development activities have also involved the participation of other faculty at Georgia Tech,

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faculty at Auburn University, and staff from local transportation planning and transit operating agencies. Kari's new course on travel demand forecasting, which she developed in collaboration with one of our Post-Doctoral Fellows, is now providing our students with instruction to travel demand forecasting. Kari's graduate coursework significantly enhances the our program depth and breadth.

Kari's teaching reviews are truly outstanding. In both her undergraduate and graduate courses, she always compiles scores exceeding 4.5. Two very relevant student comments that address her Capstone course are provided below:

- "Dr. Watkins was a great instructor. It was obvious she is passionate about what she does. It was great to have her work with us the week of presentations. She was available most anytime I needed to speak with her."
- "She is extremely approachable and really an awesome person. Definitely one of the standout parts of the course. She is also always available! Well, almost always. But enough to make her more so than any other teacher in the history of teachers at Ga Tech."

Kari has one of the highest teaching loads in CEE, with more than 360 contact hours last year across five courses (after accounting for shared instructional loads). She impacted more than 220 students in these classes, and her teaching quality is a definite factor that attracts some of our best undergraduate students into our transportation engineering graduate program. Beyond the classroom, Kari serves as a mentor for graduate students and spends a great deal of time providing them guidance and support on research design, technical analysis, and professional publications. In 2013, Kari supervised 254 research and special problems credits (7 units of undergraduate research, 128 units of M.S. thesis, 39 units of graduate special problems, and 80 units of Ph.D. dissertation research). In her two and a half years at Georgia Tech, she has graduated ten MS students (seven of which she funded) and one PhD student. She has currently mentoring five M.S. and two Ph.D. students scheduled to graduate in the next two years.

Kari is one of the best teachers that I have encountered at Georgia Tech in the last 20 years. I enjoy working with Kari on both research and teaching and it is with great pleasure that I give Kari my highest recommendation for this award.

Best Regards



Randall Guensler, Ph.D.
Professor

January 25, 2014

To whom it may concern:

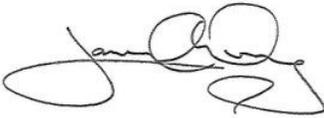
I am writing to recommend Dr. Kari Watkins for the CETL/BP Junior Faculty Award. I recently completed the dual-degree Masters' program in Civil Engineering and City and Regional Planning for which Dr. Watkins was my advisor. In addition, I took Urban Transportation Planning (CEE 6602-A) where she co-taught in Fall 2011 and her Transit System Planning course (CEE 6642-A) in Spring 2013. Through these experiences, she met and exceeded my expectations for a new professor, making my time at Georgia Tech extremely fulfilling.

My experience with Dr. Watkins was largely outside the classroom where she supported me and others in our lab group as an attentive research advisor. A significant part of her weekly routine involved time spent with students to advise them on both their projects and their academic careers. In my experience, she was supportive of exploring different ideas but at the same time pushed students to identify their passion so they can use their time productively towards their degree programs. She quickly became inundated with all the responsibilities that new professors have, but she remained committed to keeping time available for regular student meetings. Few other advisors ensured weekly one-on-one meetings with students who sought them. She met deadlines for student recommendations, she reached out to her professional contacts for her students' internships, and she supports their development by finding and creating opportunities for us in and outside the research framework. Her commitment to students' success is palpable.

Inside the classroom, Dr. Watkins was far more interactive and relevant than many other professors I've experienced in my undergraduate and graduate career. This was especially visible during labs and assignments that she designed to make use of real datasets and actual analytic tasks that we might encounter in the field. Her assigned labs called for summaries and reports that explain the impact of outputs rather than simply stopping at the end of an equation. The semester-long project for our transit course included writing a publishable paper that could be submitted to the Transportation Research Board. Indeed, Dr. Watkins places a high value on going beyond just understanding of material and insists that her classes deliver more for students. Those with either professional or academic pursuits would find her method of teaching to be refreshingly practical.

The Institute would be lucky to have more professors who show this level of engagement with students and this level of passion for their work. If you need further information, please feel free to reach me at (516) 314-5991 or jcwong@gatech.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Wong', with a stylized, cursive script.

James Wong

January 28th, 2013

To Whom it may concern:

I am writing to recommend Dr. Kari Watkins for the CETL/BP Junior Faculty Award. I graduated this past May from the Georgia Institute of Technology where I was enrolled in the dual Masters' degree program in Civil Engineering and City Planning with Dr. Watkins as my advisor. I interacted with her on a daily basis for research purposes, multiple classes of hers that I took, and general career guidance. My first year of grad school was also Dr. Watkins' first year as a professor. Over the last two and a half years I have seen the dramatic effect she has had on the transportation department.

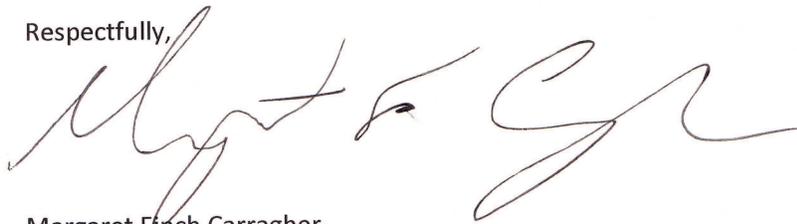
During my two years in graduate school at the Georgia Institute of Technology I was able to see the impact that Dr. Watkins had on each of her students and the department as a whole. She went from advising two students her first year, including myself, to advising more than ten Master's and PhD students in her second year. Despite this increase, Dr. Watkins was still able to make time weekly for each individual research project and continued to be personally invested in all of her students inside of the classroom and out.

In the classroom, Dr. Watkins utilizes interactive lessons and assignments that are relevant and practical. Each lesson was directly applicable to a real transit system and challenged students to understand the big picture, as opposed to simply learning how to do the assignment. In her *Travel Demand Modeling Class*, this included the use of the Salt Lake City demand model. As students, we manipulated the model and worked through the changes in outputs to be able to understand how to best use demand models as tools. In her *Transit Planning Class*, Dr. Watkins consistently presented the class with datasets from local transit agencies to illustrate real-world examples.

In such a short time, Dr. Watkins has contributed a significant amount to the transportation department. She has created a new research group, the *Urban Transportation Information Lab*, dedicated to transit passenger information and has enhanced the overall transportation department by adding new transit courses. Most importantly, Dr. Watkins continues to challenge and encourage her students on a personal level so that they reach their maximum potential while still continuing to push the bounds of her research and make an impact on how riders interact with transit information.

I highly recommend her for this award. Should you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me (Margaret.carragher@metro-pe.com, 508-415-9122).

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Margaret Finch Carragher', written in a cursive style.

Margaret Finch Carragher

Jonathan DiGioia
417 Calhoun St NW, Unit B
Atlanta, GA 30318
(770) 656-2647
January 31, 2014

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am very happy to recommend Dr. Kari Watkins for the CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award. I took my first class with Dr. Watkins as an undergraduate senior in Civil Engineering at Georgia Tech during spring of 2013. I had two classes of hers that semester: Transit System Planning & Design, and my Senior Capstone Design class. In fact, my interactions with Dr. Watkins during that semester led directly into the graduate research assistantship that I have with her now.

I am recommending Dr. Watkins for this award because, like so many of her other students, I was captivated by her ability to teach and infuse excitement and interest into her material. I witnessed that ability the first time I met her, which was not in a classroom, but in an ASCE student chapter meeting in which she gave a guest presentation about the transportation engineering profession. It was not until a year later that I had a class with her, but I knew up until then that once I did it would be a highlight of my Georgia Tech academic career.

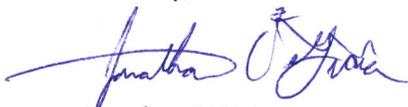
Dr. Watkins taught the Transit System Planning & Design class with contagious love for the subject and an incredible ability to weave all her classroom techniques together to really foster students' interaction with the subject without overworking us. She not only taught the subject, but she also consistently pointed us to its relevance in transportation engineering and real life.

During Senior Capstone Design, Dr. Watkins took less the role of a teacher and more the role of an advisor. As such, she helped students think critically on our own while dynamically guiding us toward the many resources with which she had gained experience over her diverse career. In general, she was very approachable and always positive and helpful.

In addition to her solid teaching, Dr. Watkins also excels in the research projects in which she is involved. She was instrumental in bringing the One Bus Away project to Atlanta to enhance the MARTA transit system experience. She has worked with the City of Atlanta to bring technology that is helping the city serve its growing bicycling community, and she has contributed many more projects besides those. That is why she was named one of the top 40 individuals under 40 years old making impacts in the transit engineering profession today.

For all these reasons, I think Dr. Watkins is an excellent candidate for the CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award. If you have any questions, I invite you to contact me at the address or number above.

Sincerely,



Jonathan DiGioia

Katelyn L. Randall
417 Calhoun Street | Unit B
Atlanta, Georgia 30318
January 31, 2014

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to endorse Dr. Kari Watkins for the CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence award. Not only is Dr. Watkins a creative, engaging, and effective teacher, she also makes an impact on students' lives that goes far beyond the classroom—including mine. I am a senior currently finishing my undergraduate degree in Civil Engineering and I had the pleasure of taking Senior Design with Dr. Watkins last semester and am now taking her Transit System Planning and Design class. Senior Design is a large class where Dr. Watkins excelled in the role of a proctor and mentor; Transit Design is a more teaching intensive class where she teaches with knowledge and passion, connecting her students to her research and personal life in the context of transportation.

Dr. Watkins masterfully instructs the Civil Engineering Senior Design course. Civil students get nervous about Senior Design years before registering for it. It's arguably our most important class. Her excitement about the projects and the work each team will do turns a lot of students' nerves to excitement as well. Through both lecturing to the whole class and working with individual teams she does a great job of encouraging Senior Design teams to work through personal and technical issues and to want to do excellent work. Her connection to both industry and academia also makes her a unique instructor. This was a transformative class for me and for my career as an engineer and that's due in a large part to her work. Dr. Watkins helped me make the connection between school and real life as an engineer—her anecdotes about her past work and about her family and her confidence in my team to do good work encouraged me and got me excited about working in industry after graduation.

Now in Transit Design, my respect for her skill and enthusiasm as a teacher and researcher, as a mom, and as the wife of another engineer continues to deepen. In class Dr. Watkins easily connects the content of the course with her transportation research and also shares her perspectives as a transit commuter, mom, and wife. Rather than diminishing my enthusiasm for transit, she has bolstered it with interesting lecture material, class discussion, and field assignments.

For these reasons, Dr. Watkins is an incredible educator and an inspiring woman, and I wholeheartedly endorse her for the CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence award. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me at 678.386.7461.

Sincerely,

Katelyn L. Randall

Katelyn L. Randall

Watkins, Kari

From: Donald Scooter Sheldon [donald.sheldon.jr@gmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, April 26, 2012 11:47 AM
To: kari.watkins
Subject: CEE 4090: Personal Thank You

Dr. Watkins,

Thank you so much for your input, advice, and assistance in my senior design project and, ultimately, in my development as an engineer. It means a lot to me as a student to have a professor who genuinely cares about my experience and education. I just wanted to say "Thank you" and to encourage you by letting you know that students notice and appreciate an instructor who takes an interest in their development. I was just remembering back to the time when you walked me and a group-mate down to the Mason basement for survey equipment despite your hurt ankle. That's when I realized that this was more than just a job for you, that you really did care about your students. Thank you again, and keep up the good work! Your future students are in great hands!

Sincerely,

Donald Sheldon
(Ferst Environmental Solutions)