October 25, 2013

ATTN: Dean Richard Brandenburg (branden4@anr.msu.edu)
Certification in College Teaching Program

Dear Dean Brandenburg:

Please accept this letter of in support of Ms. Abigail J. Lynch who is applying for the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources Certification in College Teaching. I have served as her faculty mentor since she was accepted into this program in fall of 2011.

Abigail has sought out teaching experience during her time here at Michigan State University. She has been heavily involved in designing and implementing a study abroad program in the United Kingdom related to environmental resources policy and management. Abigail was an instructor for this program in 2011 and 2013 taking lead responsibility for courses related to the biology, ecology, and management of aquatic resources. As you know, study abroad programs are no small endeavor, particularly traveling programs like this one, but Abigail took the lead on the design, organization and implementation of this program and associated courses during both years. I am pleased to say all went well with these programs and the students and our partners in the UK felt that their experiences were very successful, much due to her efforts.

Abigail also served as the teaching assistant for my upper level undergraduate/graduate seminar on campus, FW/MC 481: Global Issues in Fisheries and Wildlife. In this course, Abigail worked with me to develop her Certificate in College Teaching mentored teaching project. She was interested in applying some of the new teaching methods that she was being exposed to in her college teaching course (SME 870) in order to better understand our students learning preferences and her effectiveness as a teacher. Her project entailed leading three lectures in the FW/MC 481 course on climate change and fisheries, using three different teaching methods (traditional lecture, problem-based learning, and jig-saw). Abigail researched these methods extensively and was well-prepared to teach the materials related to the days topic for each of the hour and a half class periods. I noted her dedication to effective teaching and learning styles; she engaged extensively with our students and eagerly accepted feedback from them regarding her teaching methodology in order to improve her abilities and the students learning!

Incidentally, over the course of her Future Academic Scholars in Teaching (FAST) fellowship, Abigail saw the course pairing between our on-campus course and study abroad program as an opportunity to design an educational research project comparing the impact of the educational environment (classroom vs. study abroad) on learning. So, using her mentored teaching experience from the on-campus course, she
developed a more extensive educational research study comparing the two learning environments. Preliminary results indicate that experiential study abroad learning promotes higher-order thinking.

It was rewarding to see Abigail excited about applying what she learned through her certification in college teaching program and her FAST fellowship on campus and during the study abroad program. She works well with students and is passionate about teaching students, particularly about fisheries and aquatic ecosystems.

I am proud she is a Spartan and chose to work with me for her doctoral degree. Her leadership has made many things happen for our program and our students. I am confident that Abigail will have great success as a college-level educator and mentor.

Thank you for considering Abigail’s application for completion of the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources Certification in College Teaching. If there is other information I can provide, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

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