



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

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It is my pleasure to write in support of Matt Zajic as he applies for the National Science Foundation's Graduate Research Fellowship Program. I have known Matt for more than five years in several capacities. During this time, he took five courses from me (Soc 142, 185P, 152A, 152B and 152C), earning top grades in all five. He earned a 3.74 overall GPA and a 3.86 in his major (with a 3.96 in his major's upper division courses) while attending UCSB. During his time at UCSB, he also achieved the Dean's Honors List seven times, but he also did much more than only focus on his academics.

I first came to know Matt when he did such an outstanding job in my large lecture class (Soc 152A) that I invited him to be in the honors course (Soc 152B) that I hold the next quarter for the very best students in the prior quarter. It was in the honors class that I first came to know Matt well and to respect his broad range of intelligence and numerous academic interests. Soc 152B is a small discussion class, and Matt was one of the most amazing contributors, making thoughtful comments on the ideas that other students floated around the classroom and on the textbook. Matt was always thoughtful of the other students and worded his contributions in ways that expanded on the ideas presented by others.

After that quarter, I asked Matt to be one of the webmasters for Soc 152C, which is a small class that writes material for SexInfoOnline, which is a UCSB-hosted, internationally reaching, and student-managed website that focuses on disseminating sexual health information. In addition to being a webmaster, Matt has also contributed to articles and Q&As. When our website migrated to a new Drupal platform—which required many hours of advanced programming—Matt was central to its success. After the transition, he helped numerous writers become comfortable with the new system by offering guided instructional tutorials. He also served as an editor for the written work of other students in the class, since he has become very proficient as a writer.

Matt conducted research in a variety of settings while attending UCSB. He worked with Dr. Randalyn Browning in the Department of Writing, where he assisted in data analysis and data visualization of teacher written feedback. He became very involved with the Koegel Autism Center in the Department of Clinical, Counseling, and School Psychology, where he worked with young people with Asperger Syndrome and assisted with organizing the Koegels' website. He also conducted research for me, exploring the interface between social learning theory and sexuality, and he showed the utmost professionalism in the scholarly work he produced.

Matt has worked for various organizations on campus, such as the writing program—where he has excelled in writing, editing, grammar classes and professional writing strategies. He graded for my Soc 142 (Socialization) class during three different quarters, and he graded for my Soc 176D (Drugs and Society) class once. He has always been the most proficient and professional of all the students who I have ever hired to grade for my courses. He worked for CLAS (Campus Learning Assistance Services) for three years, doing some of his CLAS work for my courses; and I am happy to say that I have never had a CLAS employee do as amazing a job as Matt did. He was extremely creative in devising methods to help UCSB students learn a

broad range of material for their courses, and he was also thinking about how to improve. He was such a good teacher, the students flocked to his CLAS review sessions before my exams, showing up in much greater numbers than ever in the past 15 years of there being such CLAS review sessions. Matt also served as a tutor at numerous local organizations that work to improve students' learning. He has been tutoring since 2005 and has developed considerable skill at understanding students' needs. He has told me about some of his experiences, and he gets truly excited by the innovations he has developed to be as effective as possible with many different kinds of students.

Matt's understanding about writing comes out both as a teacher and as a scholar, especially after having worked with the writing program for numerous quarters and having completed a minor in professional writing. He has a friendly style of interacting—which other people love—which helps make him so effective in teaching, tutoring, CLAS programs and clinical programs in the Koegel Clinic. He interacts well with many different types of people. He is also a very responsible worker with high standards of perfectionism. He is both a gentleman and a scholar.

During his senior year and gap year before graduate school, Matt focused increasing attention to the teaching and learning of writing. He tutored and led CLAS study sessions on writing and was employed as a CLAS Academic Communities for Excellence Writing Tutor, where he worked closely with first-generation, low socio-economic students in first-year writing courses to foster writing development by providing weekly, individualized tutoring sessions. He was also the first CLAS GRE analytical writing workshop facilitator, where he designed and taught courses on preparing undergraduates for the GRE. He was chosen to be the editor for the Institute for Collaborative Biotechnologies at UCSB, where he gathered and edited 140 STEM grant proposals and merged them into one seamless whole, with a consistent writing style—a daunting task lasting many months; he has continued to work for them for the last three summers.

In 2012 I received a grant to convert my popular Soc 152A course to a PowerPoint presentation. This involved converting around three thousand 35mm transparencies (some being text and others images) to create a PowerPoint presentation for all 10 weeks of the course. Matt made sure that all the text slides were consistent in logic, clarity of presentation and format. He also scanned in all the images, using a variety of computer tools to enhance their appearance as much as possible. The entire quarter ran smoothly as Matt stayed ahead of my lectures, and his work brought my course to a higher level of clarity, accuracy and aesthetic beauty.

By now it should be abundantly clear that Matt was one of the best students from his undergraduate graduating class. He stands out among his peers as an extremely serious and honest individual. He loves challenges and rises to them with very creative solutions that impress everyone who works with him. He is a cheerful, generous, mature and wise person who contributed enormously to make UCSB a great campus, and I can only imagine that he will do the same with UC Davis and beyond. Matt earns my very highest recommendation—bar none. He will be an outstanding professional who will make many contributions to the lives of a broad range of other people both now and in the future. If I can be of any further help to you, please do not hesitate to phone me at (805) 967-4995.

Sincerely,



John D. Baldwin, Ph.D.
Professor of Sociology