



October 22, 2009

To whom it may concern:

I can report without hesitation that Alexey Kushnir has the dedication and talent to become a successful teacher. As a lecturer at Penn State, I have the privilege of working with and mentoring graduate students assigned to summer teaching within the Economics department. I have mentored several students over each of the last three summers. Alexey has excelled in the classroom more than any other student with whom I have worked.

I have observed Mr. Kushnir in the classroom and reviewed his classroom materials and student evaluations. All of these sources provide evidence of strong ability. In the classroom, he was knowledgeable and approachable. His presentation was clear and direct, and students appeared engaged in the material. Given that he was assigned a summer session of advanced undergraduate econometrics, this was an accomplishment by itself. Although English is not his native language, his presentation was clear and vocabulary excellent. I have no reservations about his communication in the classroom.

The student evaluations send a similar strong signal. The two main measures, relating to the class and the instructor, were well above the average for graduate students, and exceeded even the averages for the corps of instructors who specialize in undergraduate teaching. As evidence of his dedication to students, he received a unanimous top score for availability during office hours and appointments.

I regard the quest for excellence in teaching as a continual learning process. I do not mean to suggest that Mr. Kushnir has matured to his ultimate level of teaching. I believe he has shown a very strong start, and his talent in the classroom and dedication to students will make him a valuable asset to any department that places value on student learning.

Best Regards,

Clair Smith
Lecturer, The Pennsylvania State University