

Vice Dean Linda Boxer
Stanford Medicine
Academic Affairs
1520 Page Mill Road
Palo Alto, CA 94304

1/29/18

Dear Vice Dean Boxer,

I am writing to support the promotion of my former teacher and valued mentor, Dr. Chris Pelchat, to the position of full professor. During my six years at Stanford the outdoors program was in a period of intense evolution and restructuring, the success of which is due in a large part to the leadership of Dr. Pelchat. He has made a huge impact on the functionality and structure of the Outdoors Program, as well as the culture of the community, and the growth of individual students like me.

I was involved with the Outdoor Education Program from my first moments on campus as an incoming freshman, when I participated a pre-orientation backpacking trip in the fall of 2010. I promptly became a leader of student trips, and then an instructor of outdoor leadership courses, both in the classroom and the field. When Dr. Pelchat arrived in October of 2012, my junior year, he had the challenging job of transitioning a young student-initiated organization into an accredited program with a good reputation and relevance on campus. As a core member of the student side of the outdoors program, I was on the front lines of big changes, and felt the full force of Dr. Pelchat's amazing leadership style.

While many aspects of the restructuring were naturally driven by higher level factors, like administrative logistics, Dr. Pelchat was intentional about involving students and preserving the community-driven culture of the program. He involved himself in all the aspects of the program as a member of the team, learning about our program and empowering students to be leaders in the process. He introduced changes with confidence, while at the same time valuing feedback and collaboration. It was not a simple or easy process, and many students were disgruntled at first by the transition to a more formal academic program. Despite natural resistance to change, there was a resounding sense of respect for Dr. Pelchat among my peers because of his superior leadership skills.

I came to know Dr. Pelchat during an outdoor leadership course we lead together later that year. It was an incredible experience because while my co-guide and I were both demonstrating outdoor leadership and creating educational leadership experiences for our students, Dr. Pelchat was mentoring us as leaders and educators as well. On this trip I realized that while education is grouped into the humanities, it is really a social science. At least, it is for Dr. Pelchat. He subtly instructed us in the art of learning about your learners to improve the effectiveness of teaching methods, and coming up with creative ways to reinforce information and assess the developing skills of the students. He also supported us

in learning about ourselves, how to communicate more effectively in a leadership team, and how we could challenge ourselves so that we were always learning with the students. I was amazed by how much I learned in that one experience with Dr. Pelchat, and after that I continued to seek his mentorship as I became a certified Outdoor Educator through the Wilderness Education Association, and later an outdoor professional in Alaska.

Above all, what qualifies Dr. Pelchat for a Stanford Professorship is the breadth of his expertise. He approaches outdoor education with the rare combination of academia and field experience. He has been a student and a teacher, and now an architect of a new and impressive experiential educational program. Dr. Pelchat's mentorship added so much to my Stanford experience; he will continue to influence students for years to come as both a teacher and a program director. The School of Medicine is incredibly lucky to have Dr. Pelchat running this program, and he is an ideal candidate for professorship.

Sincerely,
Caitlin Woolsey

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