# Letter B: Symons Award Nomination Written by an Undergraduate Student

**Note that all identifying information has been removed and gendered pronouns have been changed to they/them. Sections were removed to protect the privacy of the author and instructor as indicated by ellipses.**

Before I sat down to write this nomination, I struggled to put to words just how impactful this professor has been in my academic career. They have served as a teacher, advocate, and friend to me in such profound ways that it is difficult to convey how completely they have inspired me. For these reasons, I am nominating \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for the Symons Award for Excellence in Teaching.

After deciding to submit a nomination for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, I frantically attempted to note down all of the numerous ways in which they have helped me and so many other students strive to fulfill our academic and personal potentials. It seemed a daunting task to create a cohesive description of the varying ways in which \_\_\_\_\_ has proved an exemplary teacher – their support takes so many forms. So, I decided to categorize their acts of encouragement, assistance, and inspiration into the characteristics that the Subcommittee is searching for. I will present my nomination much like an elementary school “hamburger essay” with clear examples of \_\_\_\_\_’s possession and surpassing of each of the sought-after traits.

\_\_\_\_\_\_ is a standout in encouraging learning in all capacities. I transferred into the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ program in my second year at Trent. After having spent a year in an unfulfilling academic program where, much to my dismay, I was, in several cases, treated much more as a number than I expected after having heard Trent’s claims of creating unique and personal learning environments for all of its undergraduates; I was not looking forward to taking another full credit of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ courses. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ was my first lecture in second year. I left the lecture with a new sense of purpose and a changed attitude; my professors truly do care. Throughout that course \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ provided encouragement in the form of impromptu meetings, personal emails, checking in on our progress and research interests, generous and long meetings at unprecedentedly flexible hours, and a through a genuine interest in our academic and personal lives. It was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ who encouraged me to connect with \_\_\_\_\_\_ whose \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ I am now a member of. It was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ who spent hours emailing back and forth with me about my research projects. It was \_\_\_\_\_\_ who offered their insights into the world of graduate studies when I mentioned my interest in applying for a master’s program. And it was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ who encouraged me to further my learning by applying to publish my papers. They have been, and continue to be, the most encouraging teacher I have ever had.

In my first year of university, I became accustomed to a certain format for the delivery of information. As a student, you sit in a lecture and read from the same textbook each week. If you are lucky, your class will have a seminar or lab where you get more human interaction. Again, after my first class with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, my mind and view of higher education were expanded tenfold. Not only are all of the readings in \_\_\_\_\_\_’s courses free for Trent students, but they are also of a variety of formats and are sourced from a variety of subjects. From graphic novels to scientific studies, each reading was unique and offered a multitude of varied insights. Likewise, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ took full advantage of the beauty of our campus by hosting lectures in the Traditional Area, the Gathering Space, and other unique classroom environments. They also take their second-year class birding with \_\_\_\_\_! In my three \_\_\_\_\_ courses to date I have experienced more unique modalities of teaching, teaching environments, and educational opportunities than in all of my other undergraduate courses combined.

Perhaps the most underrated quality of a professor or teaching assistant is their ability to provide constructive feedback on assignments. . . . I have received countless assignments with a number grade and nothing else . . . . \_\_\_\_\_ is the polar opposite of these professors. Not only do they provide critical feedback and indicate exactly where marks were lost, they also provide positive comments throughout students’ works encouraging them to further pursue their interests. This past term I wrote a rather long paper. There was a comment on nearly every page. Not only had \_\_\_\_\_\_ found my grammar mistakes – that, after having reread the paper several times, I could not find before submitting – they also included positive, encouraging comments in the sections without errors. This has been a unique experience for me.\_\_\_\_\_\_ is engaged with all of their students’ work, and their genuine interest encourages us all to do better and create our best academic work.

Many professors lead by example; many professors include components of their own research in their teaching. These professors inspire their students in a way that others cannot. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_, however, does more than include slides of their research papers and publications; they use their research to engage students in participatory ways. For example, \_\_\_\_\_\_ is currently working on a project titled \_\_\_\_. . . . Many professors would have included a slide in their PowerPoint and left it at that, but \_\_\_\_\_ invited us all to participate and create \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. It could be argued that they were in a better position to foster participation due to their field of research, but that only speaks to their prowess as a teacher and their passion towards the profession. Their research is designed to inspire, and their teaching serves to forward this goal.

The final tenet of teaching excellence as described by the Subcommittee is the demonstration of exemplary concern for students. This is something I can speak to both personally and on behalf of all of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s students. First, on all of her syllabuses \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ has a section . . . . that describes how students’ health and personal lives are infinitely more important than the academic requirements of the course. It provides resources for mental and physical health issues, addresses for support centres, and telephone numbers for trusted organizations. Every student – at least every student who reads the syllabus – knows that \_\_\_\_\_ cares for them so deeply. Of course, words on a syllabus are different than actions. But \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ has proved that they are more than just words. They are an exemplary example of a compassionate and caring teacher. Last winter I dislocated my knee and was unable to finish my semester properly. I emailed my professors to provide a medical note; \_\_\_\_\_\_ was the first to respond. \_\_\_\_\_\_ offered extensions on all of my assignments but, more importantly, they also expressed their deepest sympathies in a genuine caring way. They also remembered about my injury and continue, a year later, to ask me how my knee is. They care for their students so much that I believe they have an unlimited capacity for compassion.

\_\_\_\_\_\_ also reaches out to future and even prospective Trent students. A friend of mine was considering applying to Trent, and she was interested in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ program. I contacted \_\_\_\_\_\_ to see if they might speak with my friend about the program. \_\_\_\_\_\_ instantly agreed and gave my friend over an hour of their time via Zoom. It should also be noted that \_\_\_\_\_ has excelled at adapting their curriculum to an online format, offering synchronous and asynchronous activities and making themselves available through Zoom and email, on the phone, and for a socially-distanced walk, if you prefer….