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To Whom it May Concern:

As an undergraduate student at North Carolina State University majoring in Science Education with an Earth Science concentration, I had the distinct fortune to take a wide variety of courses across different departments. Yet, out of this menagerie, Dr. Cynthia Cudaback's Oceanography Honors class stands out for its enjoyable nature and beneficial content. I had known Dr. Cudaback through a student position with the Marine, Earth, and Atmospheric Sciences Department and I could tell through our interactions how dedicated a professor she was. I knew I had to take her course when I had the chance. I am glad now that I made that decision because, as a current teacher of Oceanography within Earth Science, I consistently think about how Dr. Cudaback would present a given concept.

Dr. Cudaback's in-class presentation of ideas was exceptional. Both in lecture and in giving instructions for lab activities, her clarity with the students allowed for valuable instructional time to focus on difficult concepts rather than on simple preparation and knowledge-level inquiries. Dr. Cudaback's ease with presenting higher-level subject matter translated to a more valuable testing experience in her class. For example, I was able to recall factual material during examinations more easily than in other courses, thus allowing me to focus my answers on analysis and synthesis. When I instruct my students, I always try to use language as clear as that which Dr. Cudaback used during every class.

Yet what I truly recall about Dr. Cudaback's class is just how excited I was to attend each session. I was not the kind of student who claimed every class was a joyous experience, so for me to fully endorse Dr. Cudaback's class is as strong a testament as I can give of her teaching style. I realize that it is cliché, but her passion and creativity made Oceanography fun without taking anything away from the course's educational value. For example, Dr. Cudaback often used in-class demonstrations that surprised me with their innovative simplicity, such as when she turned the entire classroom into a working model of the phases of the moon through using only beach balls and a lamp. In addition, Dr. Cudaback used personal anecdotes to reinforce crucial points. She has conducted research on bacteria at Huntington Beach, so when we discussed microorganisms at shorelines, she used this experience to make an otherwise cut-and-dry topic into an engaging one. These techniques have inspired me: I use the moon demonstration in my classroom and I try to include my personal research (within meteorology) in my lectures as often as possible whenever it is to the benefit of my students.

It is ironic that, considering the highly beneficial education methodology courses I took at NC State, I look to one of my science professors as a model of how best to teach others. Any teacher would benefit strongly from working with Dr. Cudaback in terms of developing their clarity in instruction, creativity in demonstrating abstract concepts, and ability to engage student interest while maintaining a high-level of intellectual rigor. I enthusiastically recommend Dr. Cynthia Cudaback as an expert in the instruction of Oceanography and I sincerely hope that other educators, both current and future, can benefit from her outstanding expertise. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to e-mail me at epike@wcpss.net.

Sincerely,

Erin Pike
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