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Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations
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2018-2019 OCUFA TEACHING AND ACADEMIC LIBRARIANSHIP AWARDS

CITATION FOR DR. DANIEL GILLIS



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Prepared by Ian McRae, Canadian Federation of Students and

Judy Bornais, University of Windsor

Reading through the many letters of recommendation for Dr. Gillis shared by his students, colleagues and alumni, one word that comes up repeatedly is “transformative”. Dr. Gillis transforms his students, their journey of learning, and the world around them. By reaching beyond the classroom and focusing on the relationship between learning and the broader society, Dr. Gillis has succeeded in making the essential connection between what he teaches and the real world application of the skills developed by his students. These transformative experiences empower his students to reach their potential and also produces a profound social impact through the contributions they go on to make in their communities.

In his teaching philosophy, Dr. Gillis wrote, “I believe that education happens within & beyond the confines of the classroom” and for him this meant connecting with computer science students at events outside of class. He noted that the more he interacted with students in these spaces that the tone in his classrooms changed and most importantly, students began to see him as a partner on their journey to discovery. Recognizing this impact Dr. Gillis evolved in both his teaching philosophy and his teaching practises. He actively encourages students to become involved in co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities and enlists their help to volunteer with on and on-campus events. Through his extensive participation with students in local initiatives, such as the Guelph Coding Community, Pint of Science, the eNuk health and environment monitoring program, and many others, Dr. Gillis exemplifies the values of community service and the importance of civic responsibility, thus inspiring his students to be the next generation of change-



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makers. As two community partners who wrote supporting letters in Dr. Gillis' nomination package noted, "Dan uses the classroom to endow in his students a desire to use their education to make a positive impact in their community".

Dr. Gillis also demonstrates an extraordinary commitment to the success of his students, by creating a barrier free learning environment in the classroom that is safe, inclusive and supportive of all students and their needs. From health and wellness practices to welcoming breastfeeding babies and including children in the classroom policies, Dr. Gillis makes a point to ask students to work with him to create a welcoming environment that is, "respectful of all forms of diversity, including diversity in parenting status". As one colleague put it, "Dan holds a strong vision for student achievement: not in terms of academic success, but in terms of life success."

A former student said, "Many small experiences have shaped my trajectory from 'code monkey' to professional researcher and my view of technology as a tool for making money to a power to change the world, and most of them tie back to Dr. Gillis in one way or another." This statement surely is a testament to the transformative impact Dr. Gillis has had on his students and the ripple effect of his teaching excellence.

Please join me in congratulating Dr. Daniel Gillis as one of the recipients of the prestigious OCUFA Teaching Award for 2018-2019.