



University of Colorado
Colorado Springs

College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences
Department of History

March 25, 2013

Re: Nomination of Dr. Roger Martínez for the Campus-wide Outstanding Teacher Award.

From: Christina Jiménez, Associate Professor, Department of History

Dear Members of the Campus-wide Award Committee:

It is my pleasure to nominate **Dr. Roger Martínez** for the Campus-wide Outstanding Teacher Award. Roger has become a lightning rod of innovative and engaged teaching, creating student-centered connections within the History Department, between the College of LAS and College of Engineering, and between Pike's Peak Community College and UCCS. Although still an Assistant Professor, Roger balances an impressive range of pursuit around teaching which integrate the latest technological and pedagogical approaches. He is truly making an impact on the campus, city/region, and beyond through his work on the **"Reacting to the Past"** pedagogy, his founding the **UCCS Historical Engineering Society**, his creation of the **Sephardic and Crypto-Jewish Studies Program at UCCS**, and his development of a **world-wide scholarly database on Extremaduran Sephardic Genealogy**. He received **external funding** for a number of these teaching-centered projects as well. Dr. Martínez's teaching statement and several letters of support speak directly to the importance and impact of these teaching initiatives, so in the remainder of this nomination letter I will focus my comments on his classroom-centered teaching. Make no mistake about it--apart from these ambitious collaborations, **Roger is an outstanding teacher in the classroom**. His undergraduate and graduate students hold him in high-regard, as illustrated by his students' letters of support, partially because he **continually advocates and creates opportunities for their further engagement in the field**. For all of these reasons, Dr. Martínez merits the UCCS Outstanding Teacher Award.

Dr. Martínez is a medieval historian, with a global reach. He teaches the medieval history of Europe, focused primarily on Spain, but his historical perspective extends eastward across the Mediterranean, southward to North Africa, and westward across the Atlantic Ocean to Latin America. The challenge in teaching these interconnected fields is how to frame effectively students' understandings of the encounters and clashes of people and cultures during these centuries, (like the Christian Crusades to reconquer the Holy Land, for instance) without reinforcing basic historical stereotypes. Issues of religious conquest, racial hierarchies, and cultural difference are at the heart of many of his teaching subjects, but Dr. Martínez navigates these often touchy discussions with ease. As a discipline, we historians can be field-myopic, quite focused on our region/country of specialization. Martínez, however, draws sweeping connections between distant regions in his courses. Students greatly appreciate this globalized framing. Students rave about the learning experience he provides; his FCQ ratings evidence this enthusiasm. As an instructor overall, students rate him between 5.4 to 6.0. His course ratings are also very high, varying from 5.1

to 6.0. The comments include many superlatives. But, what makes Dr. Martínez truly outstanding?

Like many excellent teachers, Roger uses a classroom process to put the students and their "thinking" at the center of the lecture/discussion. I had the opportunity to observe Dr. Martínez teach at both the lower-division undergraduate and graduate levels at UCCS. Seeing him in the classroom, I can certainly understand why students flock to his courses. In short, Martínez has an energetic and charismatic personality and he uses a range of teaching styles--verbal, aural, written, visual, and tactical. During the 1000-level class period I observed, Martínez presented powerpoint visuals slides, interactive maps, film clips, video footage, primary source materials for analysis, historical artifacts, traditional mini lectures, large class discussion, and response questions for small groups. Such an array of methods could come off as gimmicky, but Martínez's use of them did not have that effect at all because each had a purpose connected to the class material. For instance, after providing students with a general outline of his lecture, he "introduced" students to the landscape, architecture, and spaces of Spain through selective video/ film clips. He used an information-driven powerpoint to articulate central ideas through his lecture, and then supplemented these with historical images. When referring to his own research conclusions in specific cities in Spain, he provided students with multiple interactive maps honing in on the areas under discussion. By the end of both class periods, Martínez still held students' attention.

Roger's incorporation of "Reacting to the Past" games and the collaborative building of a medieval trebuchet by faculty and students further illustrate his way "outside of the box" interactions with his students. Numerous students have described how Dr. Martínez invited them to further participate in one of his many collaborative projects. As we all know, mentoring and involving students takes an enormous amount of time, effort, and energy. Roger has done with continually through his years at UCCS. What is also remarkable is how he has involved students in core academic pursuits as well.

Although Dr. Martínez's utilizes a range of teaching strategies, he is equally focused on the core tenets of our disciplinary methodology ---primary source analysis. Analyzing documents, material artifacts, photos, or other primary sources produced at the time of the event/period in question (hence their "primary" designation) requires providing students with enough context that they can literally make sense of the document. The challenge is a common one for academics: how to translate our specific research methods and interests to the broader perspective required in the classroom. Dr. Martínez has seemed to figure out how to strike this balance for his students. Allow me to explain. Dr. Martínez offered students not one or two, but up to three different kinds of primary sources to analyze in the classes I observed. At one point, well into the class period, for example, he pulled out a collection of coins, real historical artifacts, to circulate among the students. He also had visual images of several of the coins as part of his powerpoint presentation and proceed lead the class in a group analysis of various details of the coinage. He articulated the relevance of specific symbols on the coins. He noted how the coins had words in different languages, both Latin and Arabic, and used this point of observation to reframe some of his core lecture point about cross-cultural contacts in Iberia; he introduced the concepts of

global trade networks, migration, and assimilation. If students did not understand those points from his lecture, offered them another opportunity for clarification by re-articulating those key ideas in this artifact analysis. This hands-on teaching makes an impact on students.

Roger Martínez's record in creating new innovative approaches in the classroom, between classrooms, and outside of the class is remarkable. Please read more of the details of all of his extraordinary efforts with our UCCS students and community partners in the glowing letters of support written on his behalf. We hope you will agree that he strongly merits this award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Christina M. Jiménez". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Christina M. Jiménez

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Department of History

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