External Research Support Letters

Clarkson

Department of Biology

Shantanu Sur
Associate Professor
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Date: February 02, 2020

Dr. Laura Grabowski
Associate Professor and Chair
Department of Computer Science
SUNY Potsdam

Dear Prof. Grabowski,

It is with great enthusiasm I am writing this letter in strongest support of Dr. Supraja Gurajala for her reappointment as a faculty at the Computer Science Department, SUNY Potsdam. I am an Associate Professor of Biology at Clarkson University and working with Supraja on a multidisciplinary project for over a year.

My first scholarly interaction with Supraja started in August 2018, when she agreed to deliver an invited talk at a mini-conference on data science we were organizing at Clarkson. Not only her talk titled “Can we build accurate spatio-temporal event models with social media data?” was well received in the conference, but it also initiated a very productive multidisciplinary collaboration.

Supraja’s expertise and experience in conducting data-driven research and her willingness to join a multidisciplinary research work has led us to initiate a project on air quality prediction from land-use data. Apart from Supraja, this team consists of Dr. Suresh Dhaniyala, Department of Mechanical Engineering at Clarkson University and Dr. Sumona Mondal, Department of Mathematics at Clarkson University. Supraja’s expertise and mentoring skills helped to kick-start our project as she helped the students from downloading the data from the online repositories to write python code for analysis. As a result, we could present some of our initial findings in the Annual Spring Research and Project Showcase (RAPS) at Clarkson University and in the 13th Probability and Statistics Day at UMBC, Baltimore, both held in April 2019.

We maintained a steady progress in our project during the fall of 2019 and the spring of 2020. During this time we decided to dive into an ambitious direction: We decided to analyze Array of Things (AoT) low-cost sensor network-derived air quality data and combine this to land-use regression (LUR) model to predict air quality at high spatio-temproal resolution. While this is very novel research, and we are still at the exploratory stage, Supraja played an instrumental role to overcome some of the critical initial hurdles. With her expertise in the server systems, we have been able to install successfully a powerful server to store a large amount of data and perform heavy computational tasks.

She is currently leading the research team in designing and installing a MongoDB database in this newly installed server.

The students in our air quality prediction research team (currently consisting of two Ph.D. graduate students, one masters, and one undergraduate student) are highly benefited from Supraja's mentoring and advice. Her natural skill of teaching was also evident last fall in the "Clarkson – SRIHR-ICMR Indo-US Training Workshop on Low-Cost Air Quality Sensors and Related Data Analytics" workshop where she played an instrumental role as an instructor to teach Python-based techniques for air quality analysis.

I find tremendous potential in Supraja to succeed in both research and teaching. Such a combination of qualities is not commonly found, and when present, I believe is a treasure to the Department and the University. I will put forward my solemn support in favor of her reappointment as a faculty at the Computer Science Department, SUNY Potsdam.

Sincerely yours,

Shantanu Sur

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DEPARTMENT OF MATHEMATICS

From: Dr. Sumona Mondal, Associate Professor, Department of Mathematics, Clarkson University
To: Dr. Grabowski, Chair, Department of Computer Science, SUNY Potsdam
Re: Reappointment Letter for Dr. Supraja Gurajala, Department of Computer Science, SUNY Potsdam

Dear Prof. Grabowski,

It is my great pleasure to write in strong support of the reappointment of Dr. Supraja Gurajala in Computer Science Department, SUNY Potsdam.

Dr. Supraja Gurajala has been an outstanding collaborator for me since 2018. Supraja was an exemplary student in the Department of Computer Science, Clarkson University and graduated in August 2018. Our research interactions started in Spring 2018, a few months before she graduated, and made a great progress since then.

Supraja's main area of research is "social media sensing towards accurate prediction and analysis of events using big data from online networks". This is an important research area and the need for more research is constantly increasing. She has accomplished a number of publications during her graduate study and some of them received a high readership. Working closely with Supraja during her doctoral research, and her perfectionist attitude towards work was very much apparent. Since her graduation, she has been keeping an active research profile through presentations of her work in national and international conferences. Prof. Gurajala's resume details her extensive past and current educational and professional activities.

An exciting development of our collaborative interaction is working in an interdisciplinary research project on air quality monitoring. This project has started in collaboration with Prof. Suresh Dhaniyala, a distinguished figure in the field of aerosol science, and aims to predict air quality information at a high precision out of noisy data received from multiple resources such as low-cost sensors, satellite, and social media.

Sumona Mondal, Associate Professor of Statistics
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We, along with a few graduate and undergraduate students are focusing on building theoretical models to integrate different data resources to be able to achieve predictive accuracy comparable to a dedicated, expensive air quality monitoring stations. We are exploring the statistical decision-making tools and data mining approaches that will be suitable for this problem. Our group made advancement in this project and presented at the 13th Probability and Statistics Day at UMBC, Baltimore, USA in April 2019. The results were also presented at the 3rd Annual Spring Research and Project Showcase (RAPS) at Clarkson University, NY, USA in April 2019. We wanted to make significant progress toward building strong team consisting of graduate and undergraduate students and recognized that appropriate training and skill development, especially in the advanced data analysis techniques would be the key factor to our future research productivity. In this direction, we organized few workshops at Clarkson University last year. Supraja took part in the "Bayesian Decision-making and Applications" workshop conducted in May, 2019. In addition, we participated with teams of "R" and "Python" users in the "*Clarkson – SRIHR-ICMR Indo-US Training Workshop on Low-Cost Air Quality Sensors and Related Data Analytics*" (August 2019, conducted by Prof. Suresh Dhaniyala) to advance our knowledge in the air quality data analysis.

In summary, I feel Supraja is one of those individuals who are gifted in working across the boundary of a discipline and thus serves as an excellent ambassador for a program. She has an easy-going demeanor, which in my opinion, is an essential personality trait for work on multidisciplinary research teams. I look forward to hear more success stories of her in the near future and whole-heartedly recommend her reappointment for her current position.

Please, feel free to contact me for any additional information, if needed.

Yours sincerely,

Sumona Mondal.

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External Service Support Letters

St. Lawrence
Health System

50 Leroy Street
Potsdam, NY 13676
(315) 261-6003
StLawrenceHealthSystem.org

January 20, 2021

The State University of New York at Potsdam
44 Pierrepont Avenue.
Potsdam, NY 13676

To Whom It May Concern,

It is my great pleasure to write in support of Dr. Supraja Gurajala's reappointment to assistant professor at SUNY Potsdam.

I first met Dr. Gurajala through her involvement on a stakeholder advisory board I formed with Rheumatologist Dr. Eyal Kedar in support of a grant application currently in consideration at the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI). The stakeholder board consists of multiple locally and nationally located physicians, a media representative, patients and community members. Its main goal is to design (and if funded, conduct) a patient-centered research study that would produce results that are informative and impactful not only to healthcare providers, but to patients as well. Dr. Gurajala is a particularly valuable member of this board because she brings lived experience as a patient, community member, and professional. She is consistently responsive to requests for input and brings up thought-provoking questions and comments during our discussions.

I was so impressed with Dr. Gurajala's level of engagement and participation on this board, that I invited her to join on a similar board for an ongoing patient-centered research education project the research department is engaged in. Again, Dr. Gurajala has made a meaningful impact on this group and on the project as a whole. Our resulting community-facing educational series has benefitted from her input and guidance.

Although I cannot personally speak to who Dr. Gurajala is in the classroom, I can speak to who she is as a person and professional. In my experience, Dr. Gurajala is an intelligent and passionate individual who brings enthusiasm to everything she does. She is skilled in providing encouragement, constructive criticism, and thoughtful suggestions, all of which translate quite well to being an effective professor.

It is without reservation that I recommend Dr. Supraja Gurajala for reappointment. Having her continue as part of your team will benefit Dr. Gurajala's students, colleagues and collaborators. If you have any questions regarding this letter or if you would like me to expand upon any of my experience with Dr. Gurajala, please reach out to me at clovelett@cphospital.org.

Sincerely,

Carly Lovelett
Director of Clinical and Rural Health Research
St. Lawrence Health System

Student Support Letters

Lockheed Martin Corporation
497 Electronics Pkwy, Liverpool, NY 13088
Mobile (914) 564-0897

Eric Alexander Zair
January 25, 2021

I am so humbled to have been given the opportunity to write this letter about my former esteemed professor, Dr. Gurajala. To give a quick introduction about myself and how I know Dr. Gurajala; my name is Eric Alexander Zair. I am currently working as a Lead Software Engineer at Lockheed Martin; focusing on leading a Machine Learning project and supporting other Data Analytic products. As a graduate of SUNY Potsdam's Computer Science department, I have had the pleasure of taking several courses with Dr. Gurajala and working under her as a teaching assistant.

I recall the first elective I had taken to start off my Computer Science career: Introduction to Database Systems. Interestingly enough, this was Dr. Gurajala's first elective taught at SUNY Potsdam, and I will say without a doubt she did an amazing job. Taking this course really opened my mind to databases and data science, amongst other things. I recall a particular moment in class where Dr. Gurajala had demoed some fascinating code that she had been working on involving Twitter data and air quality. She began explaining how she was able to collect data from Twitter using a tool called "Tweepy". Later on that day, I ended up going home and building a fun little application using that tool. That one class session really opened my eyes to all the amazing things you could do with data collection, which eventually led me to my current position.

Without hesitation, I can say that I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to study Cryptography, Machine Learning, and Networking. Dr. Gurajala always taught the most fascinating courses. Moreover, she had a way of taking these incredibly difficult and theoretical topics, and displaying examples of how they are used in the real world. She has a natural talent of showing how to apply the theory in a significant and practical way. In every single elective that I have taken with Dr. Gurajala, there was always a research presentation that we had to do as well as a final project, which I found to be extremely. She provides us the chance to test our skills and interests in an awesome custom project of our own choice. This teaching method is admirable! Not only does the student get to work on something they are interested in, but it really forces them to play around with new and interesting tools, which makes it challenging and allows students to focus on their strengths and recognize their weaknesses!

Dr. Gurajala is an excellent professor being that she was also extremely helpful with SUNY Potsdam and student activities. She has been involved in numerous ACM club events,

such as the New York Celebration of Women in Computing (NYCWIC) conference, where she drove a bunch of students up in rental vans from the college and took us to multiple conference talks, lunches, dinners, and even a haunted ghost ship tour! Additionally, she was an active faculty advisor for the ACM-W chapter at SUNY Potsdam. When we entered the NYCWIC poster competition, Dr. Gurajala wholeheartedly supported us; she was our cheerleader. She helped us collect data, analyze it, find interesting correlations, and design the overall look and visualization of our poster with the collected data. It was no surprise that we were able to win the “Best Poster Competition” at the conference that year. She has given multiple talks, presentations, and speeches at SUNY Potsdam, discussing topics such as Data Visualization, her research on air pollution, Data Analytics, and many other topics.

In closing, if there is one thing I can say about Dr. Gurajala, it’s that she really cares about her students. She wants to see them learn, develop their skills, attend conferences, work on personal projects, and enjoy life at SUNY Potsdam! If you are having a bad day you can always talk to her about it because she genuinely cares about her students. She made learning theoretical Computer Science fun yet informative and I, for one, can really respect that and look up to that. Professors like her are not easy to come by and I genuinely believe that. If I had the opportunity I would still be taking classes with her!

Best regards,

Eric Alexander Zair
Lead Software Engineer
Lockheed Martin RMS
BS, Class of 2020

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LOCKHEED MARTIN

Sherilyn Tejada Martinez

February 10, 2020

It is my pleasure to write this letter of support of Dr. Gurajala's re-appointment. My name is Sherilyn Tejada Martinez, Class of 2019 and currently working as a Systems Engineer at Lockheed Martin. This letter is based on multiple interactions I've had with Dr. Gurajala as a student in her class, a Teachers Assistant for her course, and a participant in a conference poster presentation under her advisement.

Dr. Gurajala is both a motivating and inspiring professor, who provides various teaching styles in order to provide the best teaching environment for her students. For example, for Theory of Computation and Cryptography courses, she used traditional chalk and blackboard in order to provide step by step explanation that tailored to student live questions and comments. While in Computer Networks she used PowerPoint slides that allowed to a quick flow of information at a short amount of time. All the lectures were paced appropriately, and students were always encouraged to ask questions. There were weekly in-class quizzes that we received feedback right away, as well as daily homework that would be reviewed in-class after being returned.

With Theory of Computation being one of the more challenging courses for students, Dr. Gurajala makes it a point to pair theoretical concepts with relevant examples, making the course relatable for students and more entertaining. While in Computer Networks, Dr. Gurajala explained concepts and protocols in class but also provided hands on experience by demonstrating their application using the GENI platform. This platform was a great tool for us to understand networks-related concepts clearly. In Introduction to Cryptography, with this course having a strong math background, Dr. Gurajala made sure to take extra time to provide the mathematical background necessary to understand the encryption and decryption algorithms. What made this class so unique was that we had to implement each algorithm as part of our assignments. As a challenge, Dr. Gurajala would encrypt our assignments. Thus, the assignments are all ciphers and the cipher texts had to be decrypted in order to know what the assignment entailed. With most of her courses being challenging, she made sure to be available outside of class to help as needed.

In addition, I was also a Teacher's Assistant (TA) for two semesters under Dr.Gurajala. At the very start of the semester, she meets with the course TAs and clearly explains what is expected from them. The TAs workload is also managed to ensure that we do not have to work beyond our committed time.

With Dr. Gurajala being an active faculty member in ACM-W student chapter, she advised us on a poster presentation for NYCWIC (New York Celebration of Women in Computing) conference. I want to note that Dr. Gurajala's role in our poster presentation at 2019 NYCWIC. Due to a busy schedule, we fell behind in preparing our poster for the conference, but she pushed us all to put in our best effort and get it done in the last minute. The poster got the best poster award at the conference and we greatly appreciate her advice and efforts.

To summarize, Dr. Gurajala was a big part of my undergraduate career. With me being a student, TA and a member of the ACM-W chapter, she provided vast knowledge and inspiration that was a very motivating for countless of students within the Computer Science Department.

Sincerely,
Sherilyn Tejada Martinez,
BA, Class of 2019