March 15, 2021

University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC)

Department of Health and Society

To Dr. Silver and University of Toronto Scarborough’s Department of Health and Society,

I am writing to express my keen interest in the Assistant Professor, teaching position at the University of Toronto Scarborough’s Department of Health and Society. I was informed about the position through LinkedIn. University of Toronto is dedicated to exploring questions about health, disability, illness, and disease from a multi-disciplinary approach which resonate strongly with my values. I consider myself blessed to have trained in three programs in the field of health sciences for my undergraduate and graduate studies as they have prepared me for this teaching position. Specifically, I completed my undergraduate degree at the University of Waterloo’s Kinesiology program which encouraged the utilization of co-op terms to apply the theoretical knowledge acquired during the academic school terms. In contrast, my Master’s of Kinesiology experience at McMaster University introduced me to the scientific rigour and mindset required for research in the health and neural sciences.

I believe I am qualified for this role as I am a recent graduate from the combined Master of Physical Therapy/PhD program within the Faculty of Health Sciences at Western University that has equipped me to be a Clinician-Scientist. A major strength to this program was the ability to bridge theory to practice. The research training in my program would inform clinical practice, and vice-versa, the clinical practice experience informed me as a scientist and guided my investigations to ask relevant and applicable research questions. Being a recent graduate of a clinical health science and thesis-based program at Western affords me the opportunity to empathize with and relate to the students so that I can support them to excel within their own academic journey. Also, the combination of my experiences allows me to have firsthand knowledge of a clinical health science program and the thesis-based graduate programs. I understand the breadths and depths of the respective programs and their respective strengths and challenges. I plan to apply the knowledge gained at Western University to advance curriculum and programming at University of Toronto Scarborough.

There are many challenges of examining the innovation of program development in postsecondary education. I can appreciate the challenges of these obstacles as one of my PhD candidacy exam mentors (Dr. David Walton) recently developed an Advanced Health Care Practice- Interprofessional Pain Management program. I would be excited support the continual development of the degree-granting programs in the Department of Health and Society as this provides an avenue to teach strong evidence informed practice and to introduce innovative approaches that draw upon technology to enhance learning. This is certainly in line with my goals as a Clinician-Scientist to advance the state of evidence for the health sciences, promote physical activity and disseminate impactful and applicable knowledge. I strongly believe in the utilization of high impact practices such as seminar courses and undergraduate thesis courses, as these provide opportunities to foster higher level critical thinking and create a learning community with fellow students and colleagues. Additionally, I have a keen interest in curriculum review and development. I know that I would be a valuable addition when developing a health science curriculum to meet the ever-changing challenges of the health field. Specifically, virtual learning and education will become an increasing necessity within university education. I am comfortable with adapting to these needs through my experiences with virtual learning as a student, teacher, clinician, and content creator. My experiences with virtual teaching include being a content creator for Entry to Practice Essentials, an online platform designed to prepare physiotherapy candidates for the Physiotherapy Competency Exam.

During my academic journey, I have been fortunate to obtain a variety of teaching experiences. My teaching roles have included limited duties instructor (clinical associate), teaching assistant, guest speaker, mentor, tutor, and education intern. I have had experience teaching at different levels from one on one mentorship to guest speaking in moderate class sizes of approximately 70 students. I have taught in undergraduate and graduate settings across a variety of disciplines including Neuroscience, Physiotherapy, and Kinesiology. I truly value the impact that inspiring and innovative teachers can have on students’ lives. I have found that courses which allow for students to participate in collaboration and real-life problem-solving produces positive learning experiences. For example, while I was a limited duties instructor (clinical associate) there were positive responses for courses that were structured with hybrid online and in person approaches that fostered community learning. Aside from experiences with evaluating student papers, presentations, and written exam, my role as a clinical associate afforded me opportunities to organize and evaluate students in objective structured clinical examinations (OSCE). I was also involved with providing feedback for the generation of a novel OSCE rubric to better capture competency for physiotherapy licensure and clinical practice. My commitment to enhancing my pedagogy and andragogy can be seen through my engagement in professional development programs. I have taken workshops with Western’s Centre for Teaching and Learning including topics like classroom assessment techniques. I also completed the Teaching in a Canadian Classroom Certificate which includes hands-on experience with lesson plans and feedback from peers and instructors. I plan to continue pursuing a variety of workshops on student engagement, the use of technology, and innovative strategies for learning.

I am also interested in continual involvement in producing and disseminating research knowledge. I have recently completed my PhD thesis that investigated intrinsic hand neuromuscular physiology under the supervision of Dr. Joy MacDermid. Through the several years of my research in neurophysiology, I have learned about the diligence and rigour that research excellence demands. The quality of the studies that I have been involved in is evident by the publications I have produced in reputable journals (i.e. Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Clinical Neurophysiology, PLOS ONE). I have also been to international conferences such as Society for Neurosciences and World Congress of Physical Therapy to engage in and disseminate research. Likewise, I have been involved in a variety of service activities at the university level and broader academic communities. I am an active peer reviewer for the Journal of Hand Therapy, I have been an External Reviewer for the Master of Physical Therapy Program admissions, have peer reviewed abstracts for research conferences, and have been a PhD representative for the Health and Rehabilitation Science Graduate Student Society. I hope to continually be involved in research projects and service opportunities that are ongoing at University of Toronto Scarborough.

University of Toronto Scarborough’s Department of Health and Society is a progressive and leading centre that contributes to research and teaching excellence. I believe that these values would be an ideal fit for my career interests. It is my hope that with my clinical, teaching, and research experience that I would become a valuable member of your team. Thank you for taking the time to consider my application, I have also enclosed my up to date curriculum vitae, my teaching dossier, and contact information for three references. I would be glad to provide you with any additional information you may require, and I am very interested in meeting with the committee to discuss how I can contribute to the Department of Health and Society and University of Toronto Scarborough.

Best Regards,

Philemon Tsang, BSc, MSc, MPT, PhD