



URBAN STUDIES AND PLANNING
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September 21, 2023

Dear Urban Land Institute San Diego - Tijuana,

I am Todd Weaver, Founder of Synergy Commercial Real Estate, Inc., a boutique firm specializing in investment brokerage. I am a Past President of the CCIM Greater Los Angeles Chapter and an active member of the Institute of Real Estate Management and the International Council of Shopping Centers. I have been on faculty at UCLA and UCSD where I design and teach courses in finance and investment real estate.

In the summer of 2023, I had the opportunity to know Phu Dang as his Professor for *USP 152 - Real Estate Development Finance and Investment* at the University of California San Diego. In our lectures, the virtual, fast-paced, and rigorous nature of the summer course made effective teaching, fruitful debates, and meaningful student engagement difficult to attain, it is through these circumstances that Phu stepped forward with confidence, dedication, and an insatiable enthusiasm to learn and understand various aspects of real estate finance and investment. He did so by *consistently* having his camera on and assertively speaking out his ideas and answers to my questions in class where I assess students' understanding of critical development and financing concepts. In light of the mentioned difficulties to our class, his unrelinquishable consistency of participation and passion for learning were necessary qualities in helping myself as the instructor to facilitate an interactive learning environment and foster informative debates. Phu's contributions were especially valuable during the occasional "awkward silence" that would render the classroom stagnant. Considering the nerve-wracking pressures of presenting one's ideas, Phu has proven to be a student with great leadership potential, who is inquisitive, brave, and willing to step outside of his comfort zone to face a challenge in pursuit of excellence; qualities indispensable to achieving success in all fields of real estate.

Not only does Phu invest in his own learning, he exemplifies great student (and human) behavior by helping his classmates succeed through assisting his peers in articulating their responses to questions in class, helping others navigate class resources in finding answers to intricate components of a complex, real-world case study, and very importantly, Phu volunteered to be my 1-on-1 working partner in live, lecture demonstrations of virtually every Excel workbooks in our case study. Due to the complexities involving information navigation, mathematical formulas, rounding hassles, and having to perform calculations live, Phu's assistance was greatly beneficial as he provided his classmates with a smooth learning experience. When I tried to keep the opportunity open for every student, Phu remained my "helper" during class; it was clear to me about the effectiveness of his contributions and the immense potential Phu will have in his future personal and professional endeavors, notably the communities he will be responsible for as an aspiring *Data Scientist* and *Urban Developer*.

Phu Dang demonstrates the same drive and enthusiasm in the discussion sections outside of lecture, and during a guest lecture featuring a highly knowledgeable speaker, where Phu made several quality, highly insightful contributions to the speaker's presentation. His work ethic became unsurprising and engrained in everyone's perception of him as the term went on. Phu finished my course as the Top Performer. As I conclude this letter,

Phu's story is worth emphasizing as it shows his compassion and the depths of his experiences, it appears in great amazement to me that Phu Dang managed to vastly overcome his challenges to give a Top performance in my class despite his humble background as an *immigrant, first-generation, undocumented* student.

As a motivated undergraduate student who is not only driven and ambitious, who is also considerate and kind, Phu Dang holds promising prospects to tackle the modern urban challenges of our communities where planners of tomorrow aim to base their values in the collective prosperity, fairness, inclusiveness, sustainability, and livability. In the words of our USP Department, I entrust that Phu Dang will strive to "understand the nexus between real estate finance and development, data analysis, urban planning and design, environmental regulations, and new technologies." The Urban Land Institute Scholars Program will be an extremely serviceable and empowering experience for Phu Dang in achieving his real estate career goals. I am sure Phu Dang will dedicate his ULI benefits, networking, and learning opportunities to the "highest and best use." For any details regarding Phu Dang, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you and I hope that you give Phu Dang the opportunity to participate in the **2023-2024 Etkin Student Scholars Program**.

Sincerely,

Todd D. Weaver, CPM, CCIM
Founder & President
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Established 1993

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