



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
UA South

**STUDENT SERVICES**

1140 N Colombo Ave  
Sierra Vista, AZ 85635  
Phone: 520-626-2422  
uas.arizona.edu

April 9, 2019

Dear CUES Fellowship Committee,

It is with great pleasure that I write this recommendation letter for Dr. Ryan Straight for a CUES Distinguished Fellowship at The University of Arizona.

I have known Dr. Straight in a professional capacity for almost 10 years, first in his role as a staff member on the training team for UITS and now as a faculty member at UA South. Dr. Straight is engaging as an instructor and approachable as a mentor to students and staff alike.

Dr. Straight has recently redesigned the curriculum for the Digital Design track of the Bachelor of Applied Science in Informatics, not only to strengthen the overall content and make the modality flexible and accessible to students around the state and the globe, but also to make the curriculum inclusive and meaningful to a new population of students we are serving at our San Luis Technology Center on the U.S.-Mexico border just outside of Yuma, AZ. He is open to trying new modalities, course designs, online tools, and teaching strategies to meet the needs of our diverse student populations and help support our Hispanic Serving Institution goals. He designs his courses to speak to a 35 year old active duty soldier joining the class from the Fort Huachuca Education center, as well as a 20 year old first generation student joining from San Luis, not an easy feat! Teaching synchronously via zoom and interactive television equipped classrooms is a very challenging modality for instruction but Dr. Straight was one of the first faculty at UA South to commit to the synchronous online class meetings for online and in-person students to come together in a classroom space that defies geographical barriers to sharing information and learning from each other.

In addition to his teaching duties, Dr. Straight accepted the role as the Faculty Fellow for our branch campus locations across the state of Arizona, including Yuma, Chandler, Nogales, Tucson, Sierra Vista, and Douglas. To be a resource to students attending distance sites across the state, Dr. Straight has had to be innovative, both with his travel time and the tools that he uses to connect with students. Dr. Straight connects with our students via Slack and Zoom regularly, and developed a podcast series to share information with our students and help them feel connected to the University: <https://thenewprofessor.com/>. He meets students where they are, in an effort to connect them with faculty in a way they may not have the opportunity to do otherwise. He also participates in on-campus activities, UA Family Day, scholarship receptions, new student orientations, and takes students on field trips as part of his Faculty Fellow role. Engaging our student population at the distance sites can be challenging but Dr. Straight is adept at using traditional and more innovative methods to engage students in their campus communities.

Dr. Straight also shares his dynamic teaching style with Honors students by teaching a freshman seminar through the Honors College. He inspires students to embrace technology in their learning and has an impact across the UA in unique ways. Additionally, he shares his scholarship and teaching innovations in various ways with the Online Learning Consortium (OLC), such as being a conference committee member for 2019 OLC Innovate, and was recently recognized with a 2018 Effective Practice Award by OLC.

Dr. Straight is an innovative faculty member, capable of helping us tackle teaching challenges by engaging with our students and being proactive with, and responsive to, the needs of a diverse and changing population of students. Please feel free to contact me with any further questions by phone at 520-668-9946 or email at [swieland@email.arizona.edu](mailto:swieland@email.arizona.edu).

Sincerely,

Sarah Wieland, M.Ed  
Assistant Dean, Academic Advising & Student Services  
The University of Arizona South