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Old Dominion University  
5115 Hampton Blvd  
Norfolk, VA 23529

Dear Awards Committee,

It is with great pleasure that I am writing this letter in support of Professor Cathleen Rhodes' nomination for Old Dominion University's Distinguished Teacher Award. I was an undergraduate student who took Professor Rhodes' Queer Studies and Women & Technology classes in fall 2018.

Professor Rhodes is an inspiring instructor. She ties the lessons in each class to our real-world experiences so we can have insightful conversations on how society shapes the way we view gender roles and what we can do to challenge them. She is passionate about feminist and queer history, which shows in how thorough and engaging her lessons are. In her Queer Studies class, we actively played a role in preserving Tidewater's LGBTQ history by creating semester-long projects that revolved around teaching the community the importance of our chosen queer historical landmarks in Norfolk. In October we left the classroom and visited the Hershee Bar, formerly one of the oldest operating lesbian bars on the east coast, and some of us conducted interviews while others took pictures of the entire bar to digitize it, preserving it before it inevitably closed down at the end of the month.

Our queer walking tour project was the most unconventional research project I have undertaken. I conducted extensive research into the rise of LGBTQ sports teams across the world during the Gay Liberation Movement and how it influenced the creation of the Mid-Atlantic Amateur Softball Association, otherwise known as MAASA, the first gay softball league in Hampton Roads. In addition to consulting dozens of articles and books, Professor Rhodes helped my research significantly by connecting me with the original Vice Commissioner of MAASA Michael Holcombe. I conducted a phone interview with him and asked him questions about his experience being a part of MAASA and how its existence changed the lives of many people in Norfolk's LGBTQ community. He said that MAASA created a space where the LGBTQ community could simply exist and play sports together out in the open. Recently Professor

Rhodes informed me that Michael Holcombe sadly passed away shortly after my interview, but his words are immortalized in the Queer Walking Tour and are always held close to my heart.

Professor Rhodes has high expectations of her students, and she pushes us to reach our greatest potential while also offering her wisdom to help guide us. With the help of her unwavering encouragement, by the end of the semester I was able to see how my work directly impacted the community, which is not something I have ever been able to do in any of my other classes. In her Women & Technology class we created posters that showcased influential female inventors and their creations, and after we presented them with the class we hung them up in the university library for all the students to see. In her Queer Studies class we hosted a Queer Walking Tour of Norfolk. Our tour stops are accessible online for the public to learn about a piece of history that would have otherwise been forgotten without the efforts of Professor Rhodes.

Professor Rhodes champions innovative teaching by using what we learn in the classroom to create positive, lasting change outside of Old Dominion. I have gained a deeper understanding of how rich and beautiful Hampton Roads' local queer history is and how vital it is to preserve it, so future generations will know how those who came before us paved the way for a brighter, more accepting future. I am so fortunate to have been Professor Rhodes' student, and I could not think of anyone who is more deserving of this prestigious award than her.

Sincerely,

Lexie Nobrega