To Whom It May Concern:

It is truly a pleasure to write this letter on behalf of Professor Brian Burke, a nominee for the New Faculty teaching award. Although I have only known Dr. Burke for a short period of time I have had the opportunity to get familiar with not only his teaching style, but also his excellence in mentoring as a member of Psi-Chi, and former participant in the psychology club. Writing this letter is easy because of everything that Dr. Burke offers and because of who he is.

From the moment I met Dr. Burke I was impressed with his passion, eloquence and openness to new ideas. He stood out because he was different from your average new faculty member, both in his confidence and knowledge. He is serious, dedicated, goal oriented, and committed to the success of his students. He has made teaching his priority but has chosen to become involved in selective experiences that allow him to give back to the college, and its students, as his work at the counseling center and psychology club demonstrates.

As a former student I have seen him go beyond the call of duty, working hard to prepare new ways of describing concepts through unique class activities, and helping a student to understand, never showing frustration only concern. He has met with students to better assist with difficult learning situations, and done more than most to meet the needs of the students. He knows how to set limits and demand the most of his students.

Besides his commitment to excellence, his dedication to his students and keen insight into the learning and teaching process you should award Dr. Burke the New Faculty Teaching Award because he brings with him a passion for teaching and giving back that is beyond question. I recommend him to you without hesitation and the utmost admiration.

Sincerely,

Crystal M. Coyazo
Fort Lewis College Graduate
October 25, 2004

To Whom It May Concern:

I am extremely pleased to write a letter on behalf of Dr. Brian Burke, who was my professor for Counseling Skills. I have been in school for over seventeen years and have been exposed to many diverse teachers. I feel I am, therefore, a brilliant judge for what makes an exceptional professor. I believe Brian is such a professor; he is caring, charismatic, passionate, dedicated, and inventive individual.

When I first met Brian, he was presenting an innovative and creative power point presentation relating DSM IV disorders (the characteristics and traits) to cactus. The presentation was a crowd pleaser with other students and psychology professors; Brian was able to capture his audience and effectively teach the material.

Brian continues to excel as a professor and a teacher; one does not necessarily denote the other. As a teacher in the classroom, Brian presented lectures in Counseling Skills that taught to all learning styles. The lectures were engaging and captivating every time. Class was always a pleasant and positive surprise; students knew they were going to receive the very best in each class. Games such as “win, lose, or draw” and “how to be a millionaire” were played using psychology terminology and theory; these held the sometimes flighty attention of the students and solidified the terms and ideas.

The enthusiastic energy, openness, ability to make connections with every student, warmth, and zest to share knowledge with others comes across in every class Brian teaches. The Counsel Skills course was an excellent preparation for my current job as a counselor at the Volunteers of America Durango Community Center. The reflective listening skills, ability to create genuine relationships, and the importance of being authentic with each client has served me well in my job role. I believe I am a more effective counselor and able to make stronger connections with guests at the shelter because of this class.

As an advisor and mentor, Brian is a dynamic and resourceful force to be used by students and alumni alike. He is able to listen and offer support in everything from which courses to take in school, guidelines and concerns to consider when applying for a graduate program, how to organize and structure papers, and advise, in general. When I needed additionally feedback on my senior seminar wilderness therapy paper, Brian gave me assistance that was instrumental for conceptualizing and solidifying my ideas. Brian’s help goes beyond the classroom and college setting, he has continued to support my development so that I continue to excel in my current pursuit of a Masters in Social Work and my internship at the Counseling Center at Fort Lewis College.

It is my pleasure to recommend Brian Burke for the New Faculty Teaching Award at Fort Lewis College. Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions.

Warmly,

Shelley L Nielsen
October 28, 2004

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to serve in reference to the nomination given to Dr. Brian Burke for teacher of the year. It has been a privilege to acquire the skills necessary for my current job as a residential lead treatment counselor from Brian, amongst the other professors at Fort Lewis, in a few different settings. Over the course of the last year, I have had Brian as a professor of counseling skills and in addition, have worked with him on a group presentation featuring him as a guest lecturer in psychological testing. I believe this is evidence enough to show that his ability and motivation to teach as a professor extends outside of his own classroom.

As an alumnus of Fort Lewis College (May, 2004), I can now look back on my last semester and admit that it was a fairly scary experience. Thinking about the future and where I was going to fit into it became extremely overwhelming at times. I feel fortunate enough however to say that I was enrolled in counseling skills and with Brian's help, experienced a great environment and opportunity to disclose some of my fears which allowed me to receive support from my peers and Dr. Burke as a person. Having gained the insight and feeling that I wasn't the only one experiencing graduation anxiety, this allowed me to concentrate more on the day ahead and not get so overwhelmed in the bigger picture. Brian also taught me to ask myself, "what could be the worst thing that could happen," and in response, "how could that be so bad?" This was one of the many tools that I learned to use in helping cope with the fact that our culture puts a lot of pressure on students to succeed and obtain a life of austerity. I also learned that this too increases the need for a supportive network.

As a counselor working with traumatized youth, I feel that Brian has played a significant role in guiding me towards finding my own confidence and knowledge in counseling skills. Having evidenced his creative and innovative styles of teaching, I am now receiving an ocean of fulfillment every time I see a child take a step towards rehabilitation having begun to develop my own approach. Be it using a humanistic, behavioral, cognitive, experiential, existential, or integrative approach, I feel I wouldn't be where I am today, had it not been for my experience knowing Brian. I am in full support of him receiving this award and look forward to seeing him continue to succeed in the future.

Please contact me for any further information.

Sincerely,

Sean Boyd
To the Award Committee,

I am pleased to be writing this letter for Brian Burke PhD as a candidate for the New Faculty Teaching Award at Fort Lewis College. I have known Brian for about a year and a half through the Counseling Skills course I was enrolled in, as well as being his Teachers Assistant for a freshman level course. I was also a member of Psi Chi and the Psychology Club in which he lead. I think Brian fully deserves this nomination for he has met all of the criteria.

Brian’s creative way of teaching brought me a better understanding to the subject matter he introduced. He uses video clips and games to get his students interested and he is very interactive and energetic while lecturing. His attitude and enthusiasm get students actually talking and discussing the subject matter and makes you want to learn more. I was very fortunate to have taken his Counseling Skills course when I did for it has given me an advantage at the job I currently hold. I work for a residential facility, which provides relief housing for the mentally ill population while they are in transition back into the community. The skills I learned in Brian’s class have been a valuable asset to the way I interact with my clients.

Brian has also been very active in a number of groups around campus. For a short period I was involved in the Wellness Peers group and Brian would come to give the group trainings on different ways to approach students in need as well the proper ways to actively listen in a crisis situation. I was also a member of the Psychology Club in which Brian was able to get more students involved and more active in the club than in previous years. Not only has Brian been a great teacher, he has been a mentor. At virtually any time of the day that he was in office I could come in and chat, whether I was feeling stressed about school or having anxiety about my future and graduate school. He has helped me many times to get the ball rolling for me to apply to graduate school and is still willing to help even though I am no longer one of his students. I hope this letter will aid in your decision.

Sincerely,

Michelle L. Flake