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[The following is taken from an actual nomination for the Council of Graduate Schools / UMI Distinguished Dissertation Award from Fall 2012. All identifying information has been changed.]

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Dear Colleagues,

It is one of my greatest pleasures as an academician to recommend Dr. Mike Michelson for the CGS/ProQuest Distinguished Dissertation Award. I have known Mike for 5 years in my capacity as an Associate/Full Professor. Mike graduated May 2012 from the Department of Psychology at University of America. I was his graduate advisor. Mike completed a Master's Thesis in our laboratory, preliminary doctoral exam, and Doctoral Dissertation. To cut to the chase, at this point in his career Mike is on track to be **my best student ever** (I have graduated four PhDs since coming to University of America and all began academic careers). With this background, I feel that I can adequately assess Mike's dissertation and meritorious record.

Understanding memory is one of the greatest challenges facing science today. Mike's dissertation focused on visual working memory (VWM) in humans. There exist different views on how to estimate the number of objects people can maintain in VWM at any given time (i.e., capacity). Mike's dissertation tested the fixed-capacity models with a series of experiments that build upon each other and pointed out several limitations of existing models. He derived a novel fixed-capacity estimation technique to address these limitations. The modeling required a mathematical sophistication and elegance. The experimental procedures Mike used were variations of change detection (Experiments 1 and 2) and target search (Experiment 3). Using these procedures he was able to triangulate findings and address prior procedural limitations in regard to the spatial configuration of the objects presented on computer monitors.

Mike's dissertation research is destined for the top journals in psychology. I say this with the backdrop that I have served on 26 completed dissertations at University of America and his dissertation work exceeds all of them. One of my prior students received a national award for the best paper in behavioral neuroscience as determined by the American Psychological Association based on his dissertation work. I think Mike's dissertation work will have an even greater impact.

I feel I should say a few things about Mike's scholarship. Mike is an outstanding student. This is evident by his past achievements: Bachelor of Science in Computer Science and Psychology Summa cum laude, Master of Science Summa cum laude in Psychology, Master of Science Summa cum laude in Probability and Statistics, 4 honor societies, 5 academic scholarships, 10 awards (in Psychology and Computer Science), University of America Teaching Fellow, and 8 small research/travel grants. Mike was awarded the Merriweather Fellowship for best graduate student at University of America. Only four fellowships are given a year and the competition includes about 5,000 graduate students.

Currently, Mike has 4 published first-author manuscripts and several in preparation (that I am confident will see the light of day quite soon) and a total of 11 peer-reviews articles. I encouraged him to go for the Masters in Statistics while working on his dissertation. This obviously took away time from writing some of his research but I think it will be worth it in the big picture. Additionally, he was lead author on an

encyclopedia article, and has co-authored 5 papers and a book chapter. On my coauthored papers with Mike he has been tremendously helpful both with his statistical knowledge, writing skills, and theoretical application. On several of our publications he could have easily been first author. I want to emphasize he has never been an "add on" for a trivial amount of work on one of our articles. A simple chat with him and you will easily be convinced. He has also been involved with over 30 conference presentations which span international, national, regional, and local venues.

Mike has already become an independent researcher. He has become a valued colleague. He has an analytically sophisticated mind. He has learned to ascertain the relevant issues pertaining to experimental methodology and their implications for theory. In my 12 years as a professor I have never had a graduate student as a co-investigator on a research grant until last year when Mike and I submitted a grant together. Mike is that good!

In regard to Mike's character, he is intelligent, motivated, and has an excellent personality. He is a joy to work with in the laboratory and classroom setting. He is responsible, works diligently, and produces outstanding results. He is well liked by everyone that meets him.

In short, I cannot imagine a better candidate than Mike Michelson that exemplifies top-notch performance in scholarship and character. I place him in the top 1% of graduate and undergraduate students that I have known in 12 years of research and teaching. I cannot think of a more rounded professional at this stage in his career in all aspects of academics than Mike. I have no doubt he will succeed beyond graduate school, conduct original research (he already is), and be a wonderful teacher. Mike has the potential to be a great scholar! I would be very surprised if Mike does not emerge as a leader in his field.

Sincerely yours,

Jacob Jacobson
Professor
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