

School of Biology and Ecology



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Dear Selection Committee,

I strongly recommend Megan Davis for this teaching award. In addition to the impact she has had on students at the University of Kentucky, she has also provided a wonderful educational experience for students in a genetics course at the University of Maine.

Megan and I were classmates in college. We lost touch for a bit after graduation but then I read her article about her son Atticus in the Huffington Post and contacted her: 1) to congratulate her on her well-written article, and 2) to ask if she would be interested in helping me co-teach a class for my BIO350 Genetics course at the University of Maine. Megan happily agreed and we began a wonderful co-teaching partnership.

For this partnership, my students learn about the concept of meiotic nondisjunction and how it can lead to changes in the number of chromosomes in gametes. They also learn about Down syndrome and read a number of relevant articles including the one written by Megan. My students then submit questions to Megan and we connect our two classes together via Skype.

Megan does a fantastic job of answering the wide range of questions my students submit. Here are a few examples of the student questions:

*What has been the most challenging obstacle you have had to overcome?*

*What do you think your son has taught you since becoming a part of your life?*

*Was there an option for you to get screened for Down syndrome while you were pregnant? Is that something they are able to test for?*

*Did you have genetic testing with your second pregnancy?*

*How long did it take you to accept your son's diagnosis?*

In addition, Megan helps my class think about the terms typically used in genetics courses. Examples in genetics textbooks and sample problems often compare a "normal" person to someone with a genetic disease. Megan helps my course think about the idea that no one is truly "normal" and how hurtful it can be to call one group of people normal and another group diseased or disabled. Thanks to Megan we now use the term differently-abled and talk about people having a range of phenotypes.

Megan and I have continued our collaboration over the years and plan to write a joint article about our teaching experiences. I really appreciate her innovative approach to education and it would be wonderful to see her efforts acknowledged with this award. Please let me know if I can answer any additional questions.

Sincerely,

Michelle Smith, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor, C. Ann Merrifield Professorship in Life Science Education

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