



NICHOLAS SCHOOL
OF THE ENVIRONMENT
DUKE UNIVERSITY

March 17, 2010

Connie Woodhouse
School of Geography and Development
412 Harvill Building, Box #2
University of Arizona
Tucson, Arizona 85721-0076

Dear Connie:

I am delighted to write in support of Andy Bunn, who is being considered for a faculty position as part of your new Environmental Initiative. I have known Andy for more than a decade; I was his advisor for his Master's in Environmental Management in 1999-2000, I served on his doctoral committee (in fact, begged Lisa Graumlich to let me do so), and I have kept in touch with him through his stint at Woods Hole and his current position at Western Washington. I'm not sure how to start to talk about Andy. Perhaps I should begin by stating that I work with dozens of Master's students and a handful of PhD's each year—have done so for more than 15 years—and in terms of native brilliance Andy is in the top few of that crowd. In terms of being purely exciting to work with, he is probably the best I have ever known. What sets him apart from his peers is a rare mix of genuine enthusiasm for ecology, an intellectual fearlessness that will lead him anywhere, technical skills that are a bit scary, a commitment to doing work that is immediately relevant to society, and a deep investment in mentoring students in how to be scientists. Most people would be happy to claim some strength in any one or two of those areas; Andy is off the charts on all five counts.

I find it easiest to talk about Andy by telling stories. To begin: his Master's project with me. Our Master's program is a lot of work compressed into two short years, culminating in a thesis-like project that for most students lies somewhere between a good senior thesis and a thin MS thesis (it is done in a year or less); most struggle to get it turned in on time. Andy's project was published during his second year—actually out in a journal before his fellow students turned in their final drafts. A bit later, he published his term project from my Multivariate Analysis class. Not bad for a rookie.

Andy then went on to work under Lisa Graumlich on a treeline project in the Sierra Nevada, where I also worked for several years. His field campaigns there are legendary. He routinely fielded crews of undergraduates, mostly tri-athletes

or equivalent, to carry ludicrous loads of equipment into remote sites in really rugged terrain. I was struck by Andy's ability to focus on mentoring his crew on how to do science, why they were doing what they did, and so on—when most people would be focusing on merely breathing at those altitudes. What his students remember of those grueling days is that they were fun.

More recently, Andy has raised the bar as part of the Polaris Project, in which he leads undergrads into the nether zones of boreal Siberia to look for signals of global warming. Even Andy will admit that this field course is simply crazy, but he loves doing it and his students are ecstatic about the opportunity.

In everything I have seen Andy do, he blends science, teaching, and societal relevance into a potent mix that few of his peers can parallel. He teaches a lot (twice what I do!), works intensely with a lot of students, does a lot of service work, and still manages to pull in significant funding and crank out high-profile papers at an alarming rate. His career trajectory is meteoric and shows no sign of slowing down any time soon. I would encourage you to hire him on that basis alone. But his fit to your Environmental Initiative is even more impressive. He already has research ties to quite a few people in the LTRR and others across campus (Malcomb Hughes, Lisa Graumlich, Tom Swetnam) and would easily interact with others (e.g., Don Falk, Julio Betancourt). His expertise in climate change, paleoecology, landscape ecology, spatial analysis, and modeling will help him act as glue for your program, for students as well as faculty.

In short, I encourage you to invite him to join you. I am sure you will be as delighted with him as I have been.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dean L. Urban', with a stylized, cursive script.

Dean L. Urban
Professor of Landscape Ecology