



COLLEGE OF SOCIAL AND APPLIED HUMAN SCIENCES  
Department of Geography

March 31, 2010

Dr. Connie Woodhouse  
Associate Professor  
Geography, Regional Development & Dendrochronology  
Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research  
College of Science  
University of Arizona

Dear Dr. Woodhouse,

As Chair of the Department of Geography at the University of Guelph, it is with both pleasure and regret that I supply this letter of reference for Dr. Ze'ev Gedalof, an applicant for the faculty position at the Laboratory of Tree Ring Research at the University of Arizona. The reasons for my dilemma will be made clear in the comments that follow.

Simply put, my heart sank when Ze'ev approached me to ask about my willingness to write on his behalf for this exciting opportunity at the University of Arizona. The prospect of losing Dr. Gedalof is not a happy one on either professional or personal grounds. In this applicant you have, in one, a cutting edge researcher, a gifted and committed teacher, a "go to" person in the administrative / service realm, a generous and people-centered graduate advisor and an inevitable friend. In short, the consummate team player.

Ze'ev joined our department in a period of concentrated re-staffing in 2003 and came to us with billed (by others) as the "best appointment-seeking biogeographer in Canada". This reputation was based on both a solid pedigree in training and also, critically, an assessment of the quality and depth of his work by those familiar with his scholarship. Over the time of his service with our Department, Dr. Gedalof moved quickly to establish an active, consistently funded and grad-inclusive program of research supported by financial awards for both the operation of the research program and infrastructure monies target to the development of his laboratory (the latter from the Canada Foundation for Innovation). I will leave it for other, better versed, referees to speak to the scientific impact of Ze'ev's corpus of work – but I am able to speak to his research *modus operandi*. In contrast to the often employed strategic (and potentially self serving) model of partitioning the research outcomes into small pieces in order to maximize publication counts, Ze'ev has made a consistent investment in depth and comprehensiveness in his research – quality in other words. I say this because Dr. Gedalof's research credentials and potential impact must be understood in more nuanced terms than simply counting papers – although certainly there has been a steady and impressive stream in this respect. I am aware also that there is a lot in the pipeline. The fact that his work is highly regarded is evidenced by the fact that he is routinely sought out by colleagues on campus and in the wider scholarly community for his acknowledged skills and critical insights. I

strongly suspect an equally important consideration is that, as a collaborator, Ze'ev is not one who contributes in half measure. Commitments are honored and value is delivered. The decision by the Department to recommend Dr. Gedalof for tenure and promotion after a comparatively short run (3 years) was fed largely on our belief that his research was destined to have both impact and staying power. This faith has proven to be well placed.

On the teaching side, Dr. Gedalof is among our most effective and best appreciated instructors – at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. While numerical ratings don't tell all by any means, as an indicator of both quality and consistency, Ze'ev routinely (always in fact) obtains “effectiveness” ratings from students in the upper registers on a 5 point rating scale – typically over 4.5/5. Much is also told from comments, many of which I have seen, most of which are signed (not obligatory for our students), and the vast majority of which speak to an instructor who was both respected and liked. I am always amazed, at pubs or other student functions how many students will seek him out for a chat or a beer, how many students he knows by name, and how “dialed in” he is to the pulse (likes, issues, aspirations etc) of the student community. Beyond the classroom, a critically important part of the teaching piece lies in the training of highly qualified student scholars. Again, speaking from experiences as graduate coordinator, promotion and tenure committee member and now Department Chair, I can tell you that Ze'ev is hands-on in his advising style and that his people succeed. If you examine both his publication record and particularly his conference paper profile, you will see that Ze'ev routinely shares publications and presentations with graduate colleagues in order to expose them to the importance of dissemination and participation in their scholarly community. A final reflection on teaching contributions relates to curriculum development and collaboration. In this respect I am currently profiting from Dr. Gedalof's ability to think in programmatic terms and his penchant for collegial collaboration. Ze'ev is currently the point person in an ongoing discussion with the Guelph School of Environmental Sciences on the merging of one of our undergraduate majors (Environmental Geography) with their major in Natural Resources Management. I have, not unexpected, feedback from colleagues in Environmental Sciences that these efforts are proceeding well and that collegiality and productive thinking are in good supply. I'd have anticipated nothing less.

Finally, I would be badly remiss if I did not speak briefly to Ze'ev's performance and vast contribution as a departmental citizen. I believe it is in this respect that I will feel his potential loss most keenly as both a Chair and a friend. As I noted at the outset, Ze'ev is as team-inclined and community-committed a colleague as one could hope to have. He is regularly on hand for departmental service work when others are M.I.A.; he is a source of unity and bridge-building when difficult matters are afoot; he has on several occasions that I know of (and probably some that I know nothing about) reached out to colleagues in times of personal challenge; and been a friend and confidant to old(er) and new colleagues alike. I trust Ze'ev to make a good job of any job that goes his way – currently Graduate Program Coordinator. Beyond the Department he is a member of

Senate and a member of the University Faculty Association – providing service to the wider university community.

Canada is not, as defined by the British, a “cricketing nation” – nor do I know a lot about the sport, but I am acquainted with a small bit of terminology that I feel applies and may be of interest to you. I believe the operative term, in Cricket, for one who excels across the board – in this case in research, teaching, training, service and citizenship – is an “all ‘rounder”. In the university realm, I feel this is one of the most flattering ways that one might be regarded by their colleagues, and one of the hardest to achieve. I can say without reservation that Dr. Ze’ev Gedalof is an all ‘rounder and that your laboratory would be better off for his presence – and our Department poorer. I recommend him to you in the highest possible terms. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need any clarification or elaboration on anything I’ve shared.

Kind regards

*John Smithers*

John Smithers  
Professor and Chair