DEPARTMENT OF
PSYCHOLOGICAL AND
BRAIN SCIENCES
INDIANA UNIVERSITY
Bloomington

January 12, 2011

In this brief statement I would like to explain my experiences working, as an undergraduate student conducting research, with Dr. Robert Bringle. To set a contextual background for my work with Dr. Bringle, I think it would be helpful to let you know why I wanted to conduct research with him. He was my instructor for a capstone class in social psychology. During that class, I was impressed with the way he carried himself and his knowledge of the field. During our face to face meetings he showed that he cared about my development as a researcher and it was clear that he was willing to teach me how to conduct basic social psychological research. It turns out that these initial impressions were correct.

Although he is best known for his work on service learning, in this letter I will briefly outline what is like to work closely with Dr. Bringle as an undergraduate student conducting psychological research. Dr. Bringle is frank and honest, but at the same time very helpful and patient in developing students' research ideas. He is meticulous and also timely in critiquing theoretical and methodological ideas (a quality that I found very helpful). However, there is more to his mentoring style than just a timely and thoughtful response. He also has the rare ability to understand students' research ideas and give constructive feedback on how to make those ideas more interesting, both conceptually and methodologically, and to lead students to those research revelations in a way that allows them to feel ownership over the ideas. This is subtly, but very importantly, different, making students' experience conducting research more fulfilling, than just telling students how they can improve their ideas. This being said, Dr. Bringle also has high expectations for his students. He will let you know if he feels that you are lagging behind or your ideas are sub par. It is my contention that high expectations are essential to a successful career in research. If research ideas or methods are not at or near their pinnacle of importance to theory, conducting research is bound to be frustrating and unfulfilling. Research that has not reached its potential is also uninteresting to the scientific community; and this has several negative consequences in its own right (i.e., inability to publish the work). I believe Dr. Bringle's mentoring style, and approach towards students, to be well thought out and exceptionally implemented.

In summary, I am very pleased with the relationship that Dr. Bringle and I have forged with each other. I graduated in 1999 and Dr. Bringle and I still correspond regularly and meet up for lunch as much as possible. He is patient, funny, interesting, and considerate. I think that he will continue to make major contributions as an educator and as a research mentor, and attract intelligent and competent students to IUPUI, and mold these students into professionals. Considering Dr. Bringle's record and my first hand knowledge of his mentoring style, I think that he is more than deserving of the Chancellor's award for Excellence in Teaching.

I would be happy to talk to your committee more extensively about Dr. Bringle's mentoring and teaching style. If you have any questions or need more information please contact me via email (rjrydell@indiana.edu) or over the phone (812-855-7608).

Sincerely,

Robert J. Rydell
Assistant Professor
Department of Psychological and Brain Sciences
Indiana University