

# 2019 Student Outreach Award

## Information packet for Michael L. Watson

Good day! My name is Michael L. Watson. I'm a native of Ruston, and graduated from Ruston High School in 1998. I attended the University of Southern Mississippi, graduating Magna Cum laude in August of 2002 with a Bachelor of Arts in both RTF (Radio, Television, and Film) and History. While enrolled at USM, I was employed as a student worker in the Residence Life department and was eventually placed in charge of the access control system for the campus dormitories; after graduation, I was hired as a part time employee to make sure that the access control system was taken care of thru the beginning of the Fall semester. I came to work at Louisiana Tech in December of 2002, when I was hired by Chris Henderson as a Systems Engineer in the Technical Services department with the specific duties of supporting our new SmartClassroom installations and our access control system. To date, I've been continuously employed here at Tech for over 17 years.

My two main job duties specifically relate to student outreach with regards to both academics and student life. My role with the SmartClassrooms has continued to expand from mainly supporting to also designing, installing, and programming classroom technology all over our campus. While there were only a dozen or so SmartClassrooms when I arrived at Tech, we now have integrated A/V technology in over half of our instructional spaces. With generous support help from the Computing Center's Help Desk and the IT Coordinators for each College, these systems are kept running and are available in every academic building and to every dept. It's not an exaggeration to say that every graduate of Louisiana Tech University in nearly the last two decades has received instruction in our SmartClassrooms; I'm proud to be a part of providing this to our faculty to better serve our students.

Our access control system provides access not only to dormitories, but also to academic buildings, classrooms and instructional spaces, research labs, graduate student offices, campus PC labs, and study rooms and huddle spaces. My job is not only to maintain the "nuts and bolts" hardware/software that makes the system function, but also to work with personnel all over campus to make sure they have the training and tools to provide our students with the access they need. For example, together with Linda Reynolds (Tech Express) and Zach Williams (Comptroller's office) I worked to transition the campus to RFID-enabled ID cards; this allows students to use their Tech Express not only as their campus ID, meal card, declining balance, etc., but also as their access credential for a true "one card" solution. I also assist the Housing office in making sure incoming students have the proper access assigned before they arrive, either for summer orientation or for the new quarter. I've recently worked with Felicia Burse and Darrell Eddy (College of Business) to set up access for CoB students to the huddle spaces available in the new expanded Business Building, with Danny Eddy (Chemistry) to provide student access to labs on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Carson Taylor Hall, and am currently working with the College of Engineering and Science to prepare for the opening of our new Integrated Engineering and Science Building.

I have attached the requested letters of support, which have been very generously provided by Drs. Hood, Sawyer, and Zygmunt. Thank you for your consideration!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Watson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal line extending from the end.



COLLEGE OF APPLIED AND NATURAL SCIENCES  
DIVISION OF NURSING

April 26, 2019

University Senate  
Louisiana Tech University

Dear Senate Members:

It is an honor to write this letter of support of Michael Watson, nominee for the 2019 Student Outreach Award. As a nursing faculty member and now nursing unit director, I have worked with Michael all 17 years that he has been at Louisiana Tech University in the Technical Services department. He truly goes above and beyond to help our students and faculty in the critical area of classroom technology. His dedication to the creation and maintenance of our campus smart classrooms is a vital part of our University's commitment to providing an unparalleled education experience for our students.

Our nursing faculty knows that we can count on Michael when we have a glitch with classroom technology. He helps us make the most of our space with great efficiency and has brought us up to speed as new technology becomes available. When we have questions, Michael is there. When we have technical difficulties, Michael is there. As the fourth largest major on campus, Michael Watson has impacted the education of many nursing majors as well as students with many other majors across this campus. He truly goes above and beyond to provide the best for our students. As we work together to support students who are dedicated to very demanding curricula, we need those like Michael Watson who are committed and knowledgeable truly care about our students.

I strongly recommend that we recognize the commitment of Michael Watson to the success of our students. He would be an excellent recipient of the 2019 Student Outreach Award.

Sincerely,

Donna Hood, PhD, RN, CNE  
Director, Division of Nursing



# LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE  
University Senate Student Outreach Award  
Committee

Dear Committee Members:

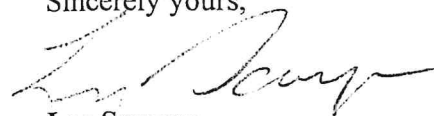
As Academic Director of Chemistry and Physics, it is my distinct pleasure to nominate Michael Watson for the University Senate Student Outreach award. Mr. Watson is deeply committed to improving the quality of life and the delivery of courses, both on campus and off, through his pivotal role as the coordinator for smart classroom technology. Mr. Watson is the Senior Engineer for the university's Technical Services office. For most students and faculty, this is a "hidden" position, one which most of us may not even think about until something does not work.

I have had the opportunity to collaborate with Mr. Watson a number of projects related to the programs under my direction. Recent projects include general maintenance in SmartClassrooms, troubleshooting video connections in CLH-322 and CTLH-328, troubleshooting and replacing the doc cam in CTLH-328, and adding controlled access to seven labs on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Carson Taylor Hall for Chemistry & Physics. Upcoming projects are to add four more 3<sup>rd</sup> floor doors (including chemical storage and main office access), and set up student/faculty/staff access for the new Integrated Engineering & Science Building.

In all of his interactions, Mr. Watson has gone out of his way to be helpful. This has never been more true than during the recent months when he has patiently guided us through the process of using the controlled access to the chemistry labs.

In summary, I strongly recommend Michael Watson for this award.

Sincerely yours,

  
**Lee Sawyer**

Academic Director for Chemistry and Physics  
Louisiana Tech University

A MEMBER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA SYSTEM

P.O. BOX 10348 • RUSTON, LA 71272-0046 • TEL: (318) 257-4647 • FAX: (318) 257-2562 • [www.latech.edu/coes](http://www.latech.edu/coes)

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY UNIVERSITY





# LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS  
OFFICE OF THE ASSOCIATE DEAN

22 April 2019

Dear Selection Committee,

It is with nothing short of enthusiastic delight that I write this letter of support on behalf of Mr. Mike Watson, Senior Systems Engineer in the Technical Services Department, for the Student Outreach Award at Louisiana Tech University. Although my time at Louisiana Tech University has been limited—I am completing but my second year—I have had countless opportunities to observe and witness Mr. Watson going above and beyond to improve the student (and faculty!) experience in the College of Liberal Arts. Brevity will limit my remarks to but a few.

There is an old adage in baseball: the best umpire is one you did not notice was there.

This equally applies, it seems to me, to Mr. Watson, a seemingly one-person operation as it pertains to the technological well-being to dozens of classrooms in George T. Madison Hall. When everything is working perfectly—from a technological point of view—we might forget it is because of Mr. Watson's hard and diligent works behind the scenes to ensure that students (and professors!) needs are attended to during class. Indeed, twenty years ago, university professors needed little other than a stick of chalk and a clean blackboard. Now, seemingly every professor needs a smart classroom, a digital projector, a document camera, audio equipment, touch screens, or a bank of computer stations. When all of those elements work flawlessly—as they *sometimes* do—Mr. Watson is the perfect baseball umpire. The students and professors do not know that he has been there, in those classrooms, working that magic.

But he has been. And he has worked that magic.

I can speak to Mr. Watson's wizardly from my own first-hand account. I arrived at Louisiana Tech in August of 2017, and as I am an art historian by training, I had a variety of technological aspirations for the classroom in which I was to teach, F. Jay Taylor Visual Art Center 103. The room is equipped with two digital projectors, and there is a way—although goodness knows I do not know how this works—to project two different images on those two different projectors at the same time. And so, early in my tenure here at Tech, I met with Mr. Watson, expressed my needs and wishes, and explained that although I did not know *how* it could be done, I was exceedingly confident that it was *possible*. The week after classes started, everything was ready to go.

---

A MEMBER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA SYSTEM

POST OFFICE BOX 10018 • RUSTON, LA 71272-0001 • TELEPHONE (318) 257-2660 • FAX (318) 257-3935

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY UNIVERSITY

Let me be clear: not a single student knew what Mr. Watson had done to make all of these things possible. All they knew was that the new Art History Guy was somehow able to teach art history in a way in which they had never seen before.

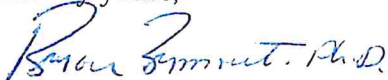
It would be easy to rely upon my position as a Professor of Art History to speak to ways in which Mr. Watson improves the quality of students' lives through his skill and diligence. However, in addition to (occasionally) teaching art history, I also have the honor to serve as the Associate Dean in the College of Liberal Arts, and it is in this role that I have (a nearly daily!) opportunity to witness—and be in awe of—Mr. Watson's ability to put out the pedagogical fires that technology can create in any teaching environment.

PowerPoint isn't working at 8A? No worries. Mr. Watson will save the day. Sound isn't working for your 10A class and you absolutely need to play that YouTube clip? Mr. Watson will be there in five minutes. Document camera not working and you might as well cancel class if you cannot project that one particular map? Mr. Watson is going to fix that right up. It reads as hyperbole, but it is mightily true: the proximity of my office (104) to the large lecture hall (105) in GTM ensures that I am quickly made aware of every technological problem that classroom experiences. And without fail, Mr. Watson swoops in, does everything in his powers to fix the problem, and ably anticipates those that have not yet appeared. He is a marvel.

And the crazy part? He does so with good cheer, happiness, and *joie de vivre* (this may be unusual to read, but it is almost as if he is happy there is a problem just so he has the opportunity and honor to be of service to our faculty and students!). Given the fact that almost every student attends countless classes in GTM over the course of their academic career, there is no doubt that Mr. Watson vastly improves the quality of the experience for the majority of students who enroll at Louisiana Tech University. Mr. Watson is a silent, largely unacknowledged, and unsung hero of George T. Madison Hall, the College of Liberal Arts, and Louisiana Tech University. He is most deserved of our thanks, our acknowledgment, and our appreciation. I hope you might consider him for the Student Outreach Award. He is a credit to our 125-year legacy.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have. Please do not hesitate to be in touch with me if I can be of any assistance.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bryan Zygmunt, Ph.D." The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bryan" and last name "Zygmunt" clearly legible, followed by "Ph.D." in a smaller, more formal script.

Bryan J. Zygmunt  
Associate Dean of the College of Liberal Arts  
Professor of Art History  
563.663.4635 (c)  
318.257.2980 (o)  
zygmunt@latech.edu