

## COMMITTEE ON DISTINGUISHED TEACHING

### NOMINATION FOR THE 2018-2019 DISTINGUISHED TEACHING AWARD

The Committee on Distinguished Teaching is pleased to nominate an outstanding educator as recipient of the 2018-2019 Distinguished Teaching Award.

#### **Associate Professor Thomas Sy**

Prof. Thomas Sy joined UCR's Department of Psychology in 2007. His research areas include "Leadership," "Followership," "Emotions," and "Diversity & Inclusion." Dr. Sy has taught very large undergraduate classes such as Psyc 2 "Introduction to Psychology" (570+ students) and Psyc 142 "Industrial Organizational Psychology" (around 300 students), as well as small graduate seminars such as Psyc 255 "Seminar in Leadership and Group Dynamics." In all of his classes, he has consistently obtained extremely high teaching ratings. Students find his classes "incredibly effective and engaging," while repeatedly praising him for his enthusiasm, good sense of humor, and clarity in explaining concepts. Student comments and nomination letters also reveal that Dr. Sy's classes not only enable students to learn the course content, but also prepare them for the real world by developing the critical skills required for success; Dr. Sy "gave great tips about life, career, goals... and has the calling to lift people professionally and personally," and is "making a difference in my life." Some undergraduate and graduate students also deeply appreciate his dedication to mentoring and supporting them in their research and careers. Based on polls conducted by UCR's campus newspaper, Dr. Sy was voted "Favorite Professor" by popular vote for 3 years straight.

Furthermore, Prof. Sy has engaged in innovative research and teaching, for which he won extramural and intramural grants. He designed and developed the university-wide Leadership Pathways program to enrich the experience and lives of UCR students and prepare them to assume leadership roles. For this program, he designed and taught a new undergraduate course on leadership and organizational effectiveness, and received excellent evaluations. In addition, Prof. Sy is co-leading the effort to establish a formal Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) on UCR campus to allow students to receive credit for course enrollment and provide for personal (e.g., leadership development) and professional advancement (e.g., career officers in the military). In terms of national education outreach, Dr. Sy has served (pro bono) as an advisor for the U.S. military: he advised the curriculum development for the inception of the U.S. Marine Corps Special Operations Command, in addition to teaching a variety of courses over several years; he is also an instructor on the topic of leadership development for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and has served as a mentor for researchers at the U.S. Army Research Institute.

Dr. Sy has demonstrated exceptional teaching and mentoring effectiveness. His classes and his specially designed Leadership Pathways program have helped students in their lives and future careers. The impact of his outstanding teaching has extended from UCR to other communities and the U.S. military. For his longterm achievement in teaching excellence and education outreach, Prof. Sy is fully deserving of the Academic Senate's Distinguished Teaching Award.