Table of contents

Undergraduate Educator Award

Edwin Greco
Academic Professional, School of Physics

Nomination letter from Pablo Laguna 2-3
Nomination letter from Flavio Fenton 4-5
Nomination letter from Martin Jarrio 6-7
Teaching philosophy (reflective statement) 8-9
Nomination letters from students 10-14
January 29, 2016

Dear Colleagues:

I am delighted to nominate Dr. Ed Greco of the School of Physics at the Georgia Institute of Technology for the Undergraduate Educator Award. I submit this letter of nomination with my strongest and highest recommendation in favor of Dr. Greco.

After being awarded his Ph.D. in Physics here at Georgia Tech, and after having first-hand knowledge of his outstanding teaching and research work, the School of Physics quickly hired Ed as a Temporary Instructor. It didn’t take us long to find out what a remarkably valuable asset to our School and students he had become. Four years ago he was promoted to Academic Professional, based on his success as an Instructor-of-Record for the School’s introductory physics courses (PHYS2211 and PHYS2212) that use the innovative curriculum, Matter and Interactions. Ed has demonstrated that he is a truly outstanding lecturer.

Students connect well with him for a variety of reasons: (a) He explains physics in a clear manner. (b) He frequently peppers his lectures with contemporary examples that students can relate to. (c) He is unafraid to try unconventional tactics to grab students’ attention. (e.g. around Halloween, Ed commonly dresses up in a costume to lecture – once even dressing up as a penguin!) Ed is always on the lookout for ways to improve student learning. He pays close attention to the latest findings from Physics Education Research, and is willing to try new ideas from the literature. At the same time, he comes up with initiatives of his own; two examples come immediately to mind: (a) The use of “exam wrappers” (b) Project-based learning, in which students report their results using videos that are peer-graded (in part) by students.

His fresh and bold efforts are garnering increasing (and highly positive) attention for the School of Physics, and he is becoming increasingly recognized on-campus as an educational innovator. While doing all this, Ed typically also serves as overall course coordinator and laboratory supervisor for introductory courses and laboratories having total enrollments that commonly exceed 1,000 students per semester. As course coordinator, Ed usually assumes final responsibility for numerous “nuts and bolts” tasks, such as composing exams and tracking student issues (including excused absences and exam re-grades); Ed has shown that he can handle such tasks in a smooth and efficient manner.

Ed has been playing a central role in exploring new pedagogical approaches to teaching physics. Ed helped develop the School’s Introductory Physics MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) for Physics I (mechanics). The course, whose development was funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, has, as its centerpiece, bona fide hands-on laboratory experiences that are accessible even to online students. Ed helped adapt the MOOC curricular materials for on-campus tests of blended learning (“flipping the classroom”) in selected sections of PHYS 2211 during the Fall 2013, Spring 2014 and Fall 2014 semesters; additionally, Ed also helped to teach a MOOC-inspired, fully-online version of PHYS 2211 during Summer 2015 as part of Georgia
Tech’s Summer Online Undergraduate Program (SOUP). Presently, Ed is making key contributions toward the development of novel curricular materials, suitable for use in PHYS 2211 and 2212 by students either on-campus or fully online settings. In particular, the new materials make use of open source content and technologies, thereby, eliminating the need for students to pay for textbooks or for access to commercial LMS platforms. As one example, Ed has been working with students to develop a Wiki-based online “textbook” that features student-inspired and student-edited submissions to enhance the presentation of physics content.

Ed is passionate about communicating science beyond the classroom. His efforts with outreach are expanding at an accelerated pace. He was a key founder of the Atlanta Science Festivals, which are city-wide, high visibility events that draw the greater Atlanta community into the wonder and excitement of the science and engineering that is happening at GT. Ed also leads the organization of the public outreach series (sponsored by the School of Physics), the Inquiring Minds Public Lectures, which feature lectures on topics ranging from atomic to cosmic scales (including the physics of the piano). Ed also plays a major supporting role for the Squishy Physics Series – an exploration of the physics of food for a general audience. Ed founded, with Jim Sowell, a new astro-photography club. Ed currently co-hosts (with Pete Ludovice and Jennifer Leavey) a weekly radio program (on WREK 91.1), Inside the Black Box, that provides, for the Greater Atlanta area, popular discussion of topics drawn from science and technology. Ed also supports teams of undergraduates who compete annually in the national University Physics Competitions. Ed has also led the Society of Physics Students (SPS) in the presentation of a high school outreach program.

Since taking over as the SPS adviser and SPS conference organizer, Ed has reinvigorated the enthusiasm of the group. He has instigated and supervised a number of activities including: (a) SPS-sponsored picnics for School students (graduate and undergraduate) and faculty; (b) a student-faculty paint-ball “mixer”; (c) field trips to locations of scientific interest (e.g., Oak Ridge National Laboratory); (d) hosting the Zone 6 SPS Council Meeting on the Georgia Tech campus (the effort associated with this was substantial – equivalent to hosting a scientific conference). Ed has a wonderful working relationship with the undergraduate physics majors in SPS; the students find Ed to be very approachable, and I have observed, on numerous occasions, that Ed serves as an informal mentor for several students on activities beyond the scope of SPS advising. Thus, while Ed has not served in a formal capacity as an adviser to undergraduate majors, it is clear to me from his SPS leadership that he would do an outstanding job as an undergraduate academic adviser if he were given that role.

In addition, his outstanding work as a teacher, his lead role in our outreach efforts, and excellent advising skills, Ed shouldered the main responsibility for writing “lab refreshment” proposals seeking intra-mural Georgia Tech funding (from the Georgia Tech Provost’s Office) for improving the infrastructure of the Introductory Physics laboratories. He is currently working on a proposal for refreshing the School’s lecture demonstration equipment.

On a personal level, it is a joy to have Ed around as a colleague. He is very community-minded, enthusiastic, warm, friendly---always ready and willing to engage with others. He has a very calm demeanor that is a steadying influence on all who work with him.
Ed has been recognized by Georgia Tech for his superb work in the undergraduate classroom through the Geoffrey G. Eichholz Faculty Teaching Award. This award recognizes faculty who had made long-term contributions to introductory undergraduate education and have proven to be outstanding teachers for students taking freshman and sophomore core courses. The selection process for this award is extremely competitive, but Ed’s selection for this recognition in 2013 was, quite frankly, an obvious choice.

To sum up, it is with great pleasure and enthusiasm that I nominate Dr. Ed Greco for the Undergraduate Educator Award. I cannot imagine a more deserving, devoted, and exceptional nominee. Ed is a tremendous asset to Georgia Tech. He is truly worthy of this distinguished award.

Best regards,

Pablo Laguna
Professor and Chair
January 25, 2016

Dear CETL Awards Committee:

It gives me great pleasure to write this letter in support of Dr. Ed Greco’s nomination for the Undergraduate Educator Award.

I met Dr. Greco four years ago when I arrived at Georgia Tech (GT) as an associate professor, and very soon after interacting with him I became a profound admirer of the great work and service he does for students at Georgia Tech. From all my years in academia in a variety of schools ranging from research-dominated, such as Cornell University, to more teaching-oriented, such as Hofstra University, I have not met any professor more involved in and committed to teaching students than Dr. Greco.

I have taught several sections of introductory physics courses where Dr. Greco was an instructor of additional sections as well as the course coordinator; furthermore, during my first semester teaching I attended several of his classes to make sure I was presenting the material adequately. Therefore, I have been able to watch and work directly with him and have firsthand experience of his teaching and interaction with students.

Introductory Physics I and II are by no means among the easiest classes at the university level; they are taught in large classes of more than 200 students, and they are dreaded by most students. Nevertheless, Dr. Greco has excelled at teaching and directing these courses. He has received more than 30 “Thank-a-teacher” student notes and he won the “GT Student Government Dean George C. Griffin Faculty of The Year 2014” award, which is not given by any faculty committee but actually decided by the students themselves.

The reason for these recognitions and why I think that Dr. Greco is deserving of this teaching award is his clear utmost dedication to undergraduate students at all levels, as I describe in detail below.

**Instruction:** Dr. Greco is a very dynamic instructor who spends a lot of time preparing lectures and coming up with very carefully thought-out physics problems that are not only interesting but related to real-life examples. For example, I have seen him explain everything from how CT scans work to bungee jumping using very simple but key physics principles that are easy for students to grasp and understand. As a result, his classes are very engaging, entertaining, and very often humorous. One example that comes to mind is when he used simple concepts of torque and angular momentum to debunk the urban legend of cow tipping. Dr. Greco’s great “magic trick” is that he develops the students’ critical thinking and problem-solving skills at the same time they are having fun.

**Teaching out of classroom:** There is no other professor I have ever seen more available to his students out of the classroom than Dr. Greco. He regularly teaches several classes with more than 200 students each per semester and he actually gives his personal cell number to ALL at the beginning of each semester—something I have never seen done by any other
An outstanding professor, even for classes with small numbers of students. He is always available to his students and even to students from other sections. In addition to his regular office hours, he always leaves his door wide open for any student to come by. My office is located very close to his, so every day I am witness to the constant parade of present and previous students that stop by not only to ask questions but also simply to visit and tell him how they are doing.

Dr. Greco also has a collection of videos that he makes available to students where he solves in detail on a blackboard complex physics problems. I often see him setting up the camera in his office to make more of these recordings so that he can keep increasing the library of videos for students to access.

The number of out-of-the-classroom activities Dr. Greco performs is too large to number here, but they include among others sending an email every few weeks to the students (from all sections) with a summary of what they have learned and further details of why it is important, followed by a link to an interesting technology-related YouTube video that is associated with the material learned, so that they can see the applications. He also answers everyday general questions from students that are posted to Piazza, an online forum for students in the class.

Outreach and recruiting: When it comes to outreach, Dr. Greco is the driving force in our department. He is not only the advisor of the Society of Physics Students at GT but has also been elected to the National Council that governs the societies. Among his many duties, he organizes various activities for GT physics students, including attending scientific meetings and labs. Dr. Greco also organizes visits for high school students to come to GT and actively encourages them to attend college and particularly to major in STEM fields. For example, he organizes a physics day Olympiad at GT every year and runs the Roller Coaster Physics summer camp, both of which are activities for high school students and both of which fill to capacity very quickly after being announced. Dr. Greco’s efforts don’t stop there: he works hard to make physics accessible to the general public as well. For example, every year he organizes a series of public physics lectures that are very well attended, as he manages to bring major scientists, some of whom have been Nobel prize winners, to present their research to the public. Dr. Greco was also one of the principal scientists involved in starting the Atlanta Science Festival and organized several activities for it.

Faculty and Service: Dr. Greco’s dedication is contagious and he is always willing to help other faculty to reach their maximum teaching potential. He makes all his class notes available to new professors and as a course coordinator very often takes on more responsibilities than required so as to help other faculty succeed in teaching. As a case in point, his enthusiasm inspired me to start several outreach programs, and under his guidance I have modeled my teaching and dedication to students after his. This emulation has led to my receiving several “Thank-a-teacher” notes and winning a Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award.

In summary, I believe Dr. Greco is probably the best overall teacher I have ever encountered. He not only excels at teaching, but he goes way beyond the call to help students reach their utmost potential and to bring physics to a wide audience, in addition to bringing out the best in all his colleagues. Therefore, I strongly support the nomination of Dr. Ed Greco for the Undergraduate Educator Award. I cannot imagine anyone more deserving.

Sincerely yours,

Flavio H Fenton
Associate Professor
School of Physics

Georgia Institute of Technology
Atlanta, GA 30332-0430
https://www.physics.gatech.edu/user/flavio-fenton
January 25, 2016

Dear selection committee:

I am writing to express my enthusiastic endorsement for Edwin Greco as a candidate for the Undergraduate Educator Award. I have known Ed since Summer 2001, when he was a graduate student in my review course for students preparing to take their PhD qualifying exams. At the time, he struck me as one of the more gregarious and engaging students to have gone through the course; it is no surprise to me that he ended up focusing on teaching when he finally completed his degree. In the time since then, he has gradually taken on a larger and larger share of responsibilities for the School of Physics, working as a post-doc, then as a part-time instructor, and finally as an Academic Professional. Currently, in addition to his teaching responsibilities, he is the faculty advisor for our Society of Physics Students, serves as an undergraduate academic advisor, and has an active role on our Outreach Committee—helping to keep the well-received Physics Public Lecture Series up and running, as well as coordinating a number of activities associated with the Atlanta Science Festival.

One of Ed’s first tasks in the School of Physics was to transition the experimental “Matter and Interactions” curriculum into a full-fledged partner to the traditional curriculum in the Introductory Physics courses (2211 and 2212). Developed at NC State, and initiated at Georgia Tech in 2006 as a pilot program, the M&I course focuses on an increased use of simulation and computer modeling, as well as the redesign of lab contact hours to engage students in a range of inquiry-based activities: formal problem-solving exercises, numerical modeling tasks, and “traditional” laboratory experiments. Successfully ramping the curriculum up from a single trial section of 100 or so students to a multi-section, 500+ enrollment course—and keeping it running as a steady-state operation, term after term—was a significant undertaking, and Ed was instrumental in making that happen.

Over time, Ed has risen to be the de facto “czar” of the M&I curriculum—teaching multiple sections each term while at the same time handling all the logistical details required to make the various sections into a single course: training and supervising TAs; preparing homework and lab activities; maintaining an instructor presence on Piazza; writing and administering exams, and supervising their grading; compiling overall course grades at the end of the term; and—most difficult of all—coordinating between the various faculty members who step in to teach the course in a given term (which can best be described as “trying to herd cats”). As someone who handles the same responsibilities in the traditional course, I am well aware of how much work goes into a successful term—but then, in a given semester I coordinate only one course; either 2211 or 2212. I cannot fathom how Ed manages it, but somehow he finds the time to coordinate both 2211 and 2212 in the M&I curriculum, every semester. Without a doubt he is the primary reason for the continuity in that course, term after term.

Ed has also been heavily involved in some of the more recent curriculum developments in the School of Physics. Along with Professor Mike Schatz, he helped to initiate the world’s first laboratory-based MOOC (Massively Open Online Course), known by its catchphrase “The World is Your Lab”—using cameras in smart phones or tablet computers, along with motion capture software, to generate inquiry-based “lab” activities that can be performed by anyone, anywhere in the world. He is also currently involved in the development of on-campus courses for Tech students that bring MOOC-like activities together with “flipped” classroom environments to re-think the way that we provide instruction to our students. Taking that idea yet one step further, Ed is working with Mike Schatz to create a distance-learning version of 2211, “Physics Soup”, that enables Georgia Tech students to earn introductory physics credits during a semester when they are away from campus (for example, co-op students on a work assignment)—and learn the material at the same level of rigor as on-campus students (always a challenge with distance-learning courses).
Throughout all his efforts to innovate in the classroom, one thing Ed has always kept in his sights is that ultimately, instruction is all about getting through to individual students, and encouraging them to succeed in the demanding environment of Georgia Tech academics. I’ve never had the chance to personally observe him in lecture, but I’ve seen his interactions with individual students on a number of occasions. Even from those limited observations, it is clear that Ed takes the effort to get to know his students personally whenever possible (something that can be hard to do when you are lecturing to 200 students and handling administrative details for 400 more), and he makes a point of using lecture to win over as many students as possible. In my experience in the introductory physics courses, getting this kind of “buy-in” from students is the greatest challenge; the material can be difficult, the workload can be significant, and the perceived benefit (to students) can be ephemeral. Compounding these factors, students often come into physics having heard horror-stories about how it is designed to be a “weed-out” course. Knowing Ed as I do, it’s easy to understand how his easygoing attitude and sense of humor can quickly defuse that mindset, and get students to see him not as “the demanding prof at the front of the room” but as “the cool physics-geek who’s helping me understand this stuff”.

Although I normally teach in the traditional curriculum, several summers ago I once taught 2212 (Electromagnetism) using the M&I curriculum. Although I was generally familiar with the material, I had to rely extensively on Ed’s support to get up and running in the class. In particular, I relied heavily on a copy of his lecture slides, to help me set the level and tempo of my own lectures. Apart from the benefit to my own preparation, those slides gave me an insight into what his class must have been like. What surprised me most was how often he was able to inject some fun subject material into lectures on electromagnetism—one of the most dreaded courses at Georgia Tech. (Yes, you did read that last part correctly: I used “fun” and “electromagnetism” in the same sentence.) For that reason, if no other, Ed should be recognized as an outstanding candidate for the Undergraduate Educator award; the greatest skill a teacher can bring to the table is the ability to make the subject matter fun, and “trick” the students into wanting to do the work required to learn the material. Ed Greco certainly does an outstanding job of engaging his students and is, in my opinion, one of the best instructors in our department because of that ability.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Martin M. Jarrio, PhD.  
Academic Professional  
School of Physics
TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

I am one of the lucky few who experiences a rush of excitement when standing in front of 250 disinterested students. I will be responsible for bridging that connection between the abstract concepts they struggled with in calculus and their observations of the world around them. I will peel back the curtain and divulge those secrets we physicists have been able to pry from nature over the last 3000 years. The opportunity to teach and engage a group of students is simultaneously a privilege and a serious responsibility. Unfortunately, I did not realize any of this until I was 30 years old, standing in front of my first physics lecture, with nothing but a freshly minted Ph.D. and a few naive ideas about how to be an effective instructor of physics.

I quickly realized that I needed to set learning goals for my students as well as goals for my own teaching. For my students, I want them to see physics as a small set of fundamental principles that describe our universe through modeling and approximation. I wanted them to learn to use these principles to make predictions about what will or cannot happen using every mathematical and computational tool at their disposal. For myself, I want to be actively engaging my students in the classroom. I want the development of my own pedagogy to be an iterative process, one in which I am continually engaged in learning and improving the effectiveness of my teaching, rejecting what does not work and searching for new ideas to bring to the table. Outside of the classroom, I want to provide the tools and environment needed for my students to develop into self-directed learners of physics. If I am successful, each student will complete my class with a deeper understanding of physics as well as the means to continue to enrich their understanding of the physical laws of nature long after the semester ends.

Over time, I have developed many different strategies for meeting my goals as a physics instructor. To help my students reach their learning goals, I practice what I preach. I always work examples from first principles and require my students to do the same in my assessment of their work. While this seems unnecessary to them at first for simple problems, it becomes crucial when tackling challenging or unfamiliar problems. For example, a favorite problem I give my students is to use fundamental physics principles to determine if Superman’s origin story is plausible. There are no specialized equations that a student can look up in a textbook. However, by reducing the problem to a simplified model and starting from first principles, students are able to analyze the physics of leaping over a tall building here on Earth and determine what implications that would have for Superman’s home world of Krypton.

The vast majority of students taking my physics classes are not physics majors. Many of them start the term with little interest in physics beyond completing a prerequisite. The largest obstacle I face in my teaching is convincing my students that there is a connection between what they learn in my classroom and the problems they will encounter in their own field of study. To address this challenge, I like to give my students complex and context-rich problems. These question are very different from the types of problems they encounter in their homework. These supplemental problems do not lend themselves to a unique solution; every student can arrive at a slightly different answer. These novel problems also combine multiple concepts from our course and require the students to spend up to two weeks working on a solution.

The sugar that sells these complex problems to my students is an element of fun. For example, a recent viral video showed a group of rock climbers who built the world’s largest rope swing on a natural bridge formation in Utah. After sharing this video with my students, I asked them to make some simple approximations about the speed of the swing and the strength of the rope. Then they are instructed to use their computational tools to model the motion of the rope swing and compare their results with the analytical model they made. In addition to the questions I pose to them, they are encouraged to come up with their own predictions and test them against their simulation.

Students are instructed to glean details of the problem from the video or other online resources about rock climbing. To add an additional element of fun, students present their results in a five-minute video that is then viewed by other students in the class. Their grade on the problem is based on my evaluation and that of their peers. Knowing that a big part of their grade is based on peer evaluation encourages students to be creative in their solution and put extra effort into their research and analysis. In the end, feedback from my students on these video problems has been very positive and many of them have been shocked to learn that physics could be applied to something fun that came from YouTube.

Recently, these ideas have been expanded into an online version of introductory physics with lab. Utilizing an element of fun from YouTube, students look for videos to analyze or create their own using camera phones. As part of a students’ online lab experience they are asked to analyze and report their findings in a short video presentation. These video lab reports can then be graded by peers, TAs or instructor for a grade. Each lab has a physics theme, culminating in a final “Choose your own adventure” lab exercise in which students are asked to build physics and computational model to be applied to something in their life they are passionate about.
Online students never cease to surprise me with their final lab report. Students submit video reports on everything from diving, dressage, to a proposed mechanism for the creation of Saturn’s rings. Students are proud of their video reports and often share them through Facebook and other social media websites. Video lab reports have the benefit of leaving students with a tangible, shareable, product of their hard work in introductory physics. Experience from these online classes have been so successful that they are now influencing the development of on-campus lab exercises.

I believe that good physics pedagogy should be researched, based and drawn from physics education, psychology and cognitive science. This belief directs my effort as an instructor to engage my students in the classroom through active learning exercises. For example, I regularly poll my students electronically during lecture to gauge the level of understanding. My lecture style is a mix of worked examples, inclass demonstrations, computer simulation and analysis of videos from the internet.

When dealing with a class size that numbers in the hundreds, there will always be many different learning styles present in the classroom. The learning methods and resources that work best for me will not necessarily work best for many of my students. This is further complicated by the administrative burden of making individual one-on-one time for so many students. To address these issues, I rely on research from cognitive science that recommends presenting students with choices, or different paths, towards their goal of a good grade. In addition to the varying methods of my lecture delivery, I provide my students with a host of resources outside of the classroom. For example, I post video solutions of difficult problems, old exams, standard examples from each chapter, online practice assignments and skill assessment, and weekly email reviews of topics that were covered in class that week.

Many of these resources available to students are optional or not a required part of their evaluation in the course. Students are encouraged to find what works best for them by choosing which activities to complete and be evaluated over. For example, one activity asks students to completing post exam evaluations that I have created based on research in education and cognitive science. On these evaluations, students must reflect on their study strategies, time allocation and the types of errors made on the exam. To address the issue of access to the instructor I follow the suggestion from education research that I remove myself as the single source of knowledge for my students. For example, I have implemented a free online community for my class where students can ask, answer, and explore topics from class. Students can do this anonymously and I have the option of endorsing students’ answers and providing supplemental instruction when interesting questions arise. This allows students to build confidence and encourages them to discuss the more difficult concepts outside of the classroom.

In many ways I believe that a successful teaching philosophy should parallel the progress of my students’ learning of physics. Like them, my pedagogy is continually evolving and I must be involved in continual assessment of my own teaching and the progress of my students. One simple way of doing this is by giving a midterm in-class teaching evaluation for my students to complete anonymously. After reading through their feedback, I devote a few minutes of class time to address the issues they raised.

What areas of improvement have they suggested that I can accommodate? Do they have a misunderstanding about my motivation for how the class is currently being run? This dialog closes the feedback loop and assures them that, within reason, I am willing to tailor my instruction to their needs and that I genuinely care about their physics education.

On a deeper level, my own development as an educator requires continual feedback from outside of the classroom. I am a strong supporter of regular communication with my fellow faculty members in psychology and actively participate in a physics education research group. Each semester we collect performance data from my class at the beginning and end of the term. By analyzing this data my colleagues and I have been able to assess the effectiveness, or lack thereof, of changes to our curriculum. For example, by analyzing student responses to post exam evaluations, given throughout the semester, I was able to show that there was no benefit to post exam interviews between the student and instructor.

I was also able to glean insight into which study strategies proved useful or ineffective in preparing for the exam. I could then pass on this information to my students as well as the broader academic community. Over the years, it has been this active involvement and dialog with my students and the education research community that has provided a deeper understanding of my own pedagogy, as well as inspiration for new attempts in the classroom.

My greatest sense of accomplishment in teaching always comes two or three semesters after a class has ended. Out of the blue an email from an old student materializes in my inbox. These emails always start off the same way “you probably don’t remember me but...” This is then followed by a link to a very interesting video, discussion or article that the student came across and that made them immediately think of me. If I am really lucky, they will even offer up a suggested explanation based on what they remembered from our class. Whenever I read those emails I get that same rush of excitement that I had that first day in lecture. Only now, I can appreciate it all the more.
Dr. Greco was by far my favorite teacher of not only last semester, but of my entire college career. He was absolutely dedicated to helping students learn, even if it meant repeating information several times so we could understand it better. One time he even let us post questions online so we could anonymously ask for clarification! He remembered my name in class and took every question I had seriously, which was incredibly helpful because I usually am too nervous to say anything in class, especially in big lecture halls like in Howey. Although in class you could tell he really cared about his students, you can really see it through the extra time he gave us throughout the year, even going so far as to create a textbook for physics students just so we would not have to buy the book! Good grief, he even gave us his phone number in case we had a physics question and needed help! Not many people, let alone teachers, would be so willing to help students learn. He constantly encouraged us to think about different aspects of our lives from a physics perspective, which is something I still find myself doing.

I know that there are a lot of wonderful teachers here at Tech that deserve to be recognized, but if I could recognize one it would hands down be Dr. Greco, for welcoming his students into a fun and engaging learning environment.

Thank you so much for your time,

Maggie O'Bryant
mobryant3@gatech.edu

My name is Joe Lesniak and I was in Prof. Greco's 2211 and 2212 classes. After taking him for 2211, I absolutely knew I wanted him again for 2212 because he was that good of a teacher. Although I genuinely enjoy physics, I realize much of the material can come across as boring and unexciting. Prof. Greco made sure that wouldn't be the case in his classes. Whether it was jumping on a plastic trash can to teach us about forces or having student volunteers collide with one another to help us understand conservation of momentum, he would go above and beyond to not just teach us the material, but to simultaneously engage us and get us excited about traditionally dull topics. And for as good as he was in the classroom, he was even better in his office. I don't know if I've ever had a professor who encouraged and entertained questions as frequently and thoughtfully as Prof. Greco. If you met with him during his office hours 1 on 1 to clarify a question you had, he would make sure you left with a thorough and deep understanding of whatever it was that was unclear to you before. Very rarely, at least in my experience, does a teacher's passion rub off on their students, especially in an introductory-level course, yet Prof. Greco's zealous nature regarding anything remotely involving physics was uniquely contagious. I could not have asked for a better professor.

Best,
Joe Lesniak
joseph.f.lesniak@gmail.com

I was one of Dr. Greco's Physics II students last semester and heard he was nominated for a GT teaching award. He asked us to send a brief write-up of our thoughts and send them to you, so please include this in his packet:

Dr. Greco is a fantastic professor in many ways, from class engagement to explanation of tough material. It is clear he genuinely cares about every student and will go to great lengths to help them. He balances lectures very well, using just enough humor to keep our attention and by going through problems of different difficulty levels to help many students progress. Using the clickers helped me a lot by quickly (and quite accurately) determining what topics I should focus on and what I understood. He makes himself available when the students are free (he gives us a poll at the beginning of the semester asking when we are available/when he should have his office hours), and is more than happy to meet at other times as well. Although the topics are challenging, Dr. Greco goes above and beyond to make sure his students have a good grip on the material, but are challenged along the way.

Thank you,
Katherine Gross
Aerospace Engineering 440-991-7005 katherine.gross27@gmail.com
I am certainly happy to contribute my opinion - I believe that Dr. Greco is an excellent choice for an award of this type. I took Dr. Greco's Physics 2212 class last semester, and prior to that his 2211 class in the Spring of 2015. If my choice to return for a second semester was any indication, I obviously was pleased with the experience.

Over my years in school, I have had the luxury of being surrounded by a number of fantastic teachers who have helped mold me into who I am today. In the same breath, I have also encountered those who either did not take their jobs seriously, or were simply unaware how to. While I always give the benefit of the doubt, I do not reserve criticism. The university system further confounds the situation since for many professors, teaching is neither their primary profession, nor their area of expertise. Sometimes that shows, but not in Dr. Greco.

No class will ever be perfect, and someone will always complain about something: Long labs, faulty equipment, typos on tests. But it is clear that Dr. Greco spends time every day attempting to understand and address these imperfections. Whether it be analyzing student questionnaires alongside test results trying to identify what most helps students to succeed, or taking extra time in class to work a problem because less than 90% of the class failed to answer it correctly on a clicker question - even in some cases recording videos of problems outside of class in hopes that it will help a few less students goof it up on a test. Dr. Greco cares about his teaching, not just for his own purposes, but because he genuinely wants students to succeed and engage with the material. All 400+ of them. And that's what truly matters. Being a lively and amusing lecturer is icing on the cake.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if I can provide additional information or thoughts on my experience.

Regards,
Lucas Christian       lchristian@gatech.edu

I do believe Dr. Greco is very deserving of the teaching award. In every lecture he was very enthusiastic about what he was teaching and it was clear he loves what he does. Although I am not a physics major, nor will I probably pursue it much further in depth in the future, I had chosen to continue to take physics II last semester instead of EAS to fulfill my lab-in-sequence requirement due to surprisingly making A in physics I and consequently having the belief that I could do it again (I did). His teaching style worked with me and even though I had definitely struggled (it is still a hard pair of classes), I think I actually did learn something and get better. He is not one of those professors who blab on in monotone, read directly from a slide, or just write equations and move on.

He is approachable and always encouraging students to seek out what physics has to offer, as even in the recent email he sent students letting us know about this award, he finished with a reminder that it wasn't too late to change to a physics major or minor. Also, I think his pretty-much-almost-weekly physics phun piazza notes and having had included a video from veritasium (a science youtuber I subscribe to) in class are worth bonus consideration.

I realize this isn't much or extremely in depth (might not be what you were looking for) but I hope it was worth something.

Thank you,
Alexandra Thompson
Computer Science Major       athompson77@gatech.edu

I honestly don’t know why anyone would miss physics class with Greco. It wasn’t even an 8 am! When I heard Professor Greco was receiving an award for his fantastic teaching, I thought to myself, “Well of course.” Especially for those of us who are engineers, physics classes have an associated dread. But once classes started, Professor Greco would come in with more energy than the one hundred and fifty or so students combined, and he would do his best to wake us up and get us excited about how awesome something was and its practical applications. That last part was what got me. At every turn of the class, I would try to come up with new applications. For Maxwell’s equations, trying to figure out if I could levitate a TV and then power it through flux kept me up some nights when I should have been studying or going to bed. That class really got me excited about physics, and that experience with Professor Greco was invaluable. I have come to appreciate the curiosity I have cultivated which would not have been possible with a teacher any less devoted to his craft, or any less desire to teach others. Thank you so much Professor, and congratulations!

Nicholas Liao
nliao7@gatech.edu
I heard that Dr. Greco needed recommendations for a GT teaching award, and I wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed taking his class.

Dr. Greco is undeniably one of the best professors at Tech and one of the best teachers I have ever had the privilege to study under. His enthusiasm for teaching and his genuine desire to get to know his students are rare, but he manages to couple these attributes with a real talent for conveying complicated ideas in a simple and fun way. Registering for his class was an easy choice – everybody signing up for the class hoped to get Dr. Greco. I was lucky enough to land a spot in Dr. Greco’s sections for both Physics 1 and 2, and I am confident that his teaching was what made my experience so great. Physics has been my favorite class at Tech so far, and I have Dr. Greco to thank for nurturing my love for the topic. I do not believe that you can find a worthier candidate for this teaching award, and I highly recommend Dr. Greco for this honor.

Please let me know if I can provide any more information.

Thank you,
Victoria Kravets
BS Biomedical Engineering ’18 vkravets3@gatech.edu

Stress dominates the life of most students at Tech. Academically, our school is consistently one of the most rigorous and demanding in the nation. So when I am able to enjoy and look forward to attending class, that says something. I have yet to meet another professor that brings such enthusiasm to a class setting. Greco could perform a comic routine all the while driving home the fundamental principals of physics. I aspire to enjoy my work as much as he enjoys teaching. The manner in which he taught has rooted into my brain the foundations of conceptual physics, which I will undoubtedly need to recall as I pursue my degree in mechanical engineering. I firmly believe that Dr. Greco was the teacher of the year.

Michael Slayton
Woodruff School of Mechanical Engineering 443-285-9092 mslayton6@gatech.edu

I believe that Dr. Greco is one of the most engaging professors I’ve had here at Georgia Tech. I learned Physics 2212, Electromagnetism, with him last semester. He truly has a passion for physics and loves to share that knowledge with students. One particular quality that stands out is his teaching method. He is well aware that students have shorter attention spans in the morning and strives to make his classes as fun and interesting as possible. I appreciate his effort to convey very difficult topics in the simplest way, trying out new methods of gauging the class' progress and where we need improvement. His jokes truly highlight the joy of learning. He is also extremely fair in grading and truly cares about students learning the material. He would be a great candidate for receiving the GT teaching award.

Stephanie Tang
Industrial and Systems Engineering 770.906.6131 stephanietang@gatech.edu

Last semester, I took physics II with Dr. Greco and loved every minute of it. While it can be easy for professors at Tech to grow complacent with students due to the student population's tendency to overemphasize the importance of their grades, one thing I noticed throughout the semester was Greco's unceasing efforts to reach out to the students. Every class, he does what he can to make the students feel relaxed as well as simplify the physics to where it can be easily understood. Beyond this, he also is taking steps to make it easier for students to access the class. His web blog textbook to be freely distributed to students. I freaking loved having him last semester and I definitely think he's worthy of the award.

Ian Sebastian
iancsebastian65@gmail.com
My name is Sean Fitzpatrick and I had PHYS 2212 with Professor Greco last semester. When he said we could write him a recommendation, I immediately sat down to begin this email. Professor Greco is the most passionate and genuinely caring professor I have had in two years at Georgia Tech. He goes out of his way to listen to and address the concerns of hundreds of students at a time, and even gives students a special code for priority emails. His weekly updates show relevant and interesting applications of all the things we learn in class, and Professor Greco makes a superb effort to stimulate our interest in physics. I have enormous respect for the pride and passion and superhuman effort Professor Greco puts into his work, and I wish him all the best.

Sincerely,
Sean Fitzpatrick
Woodruff School of Mechanical Engineering     swfitzpatrick8@gmail.com

Physics was my least favorite subject in the past couple of years, due mostly to rather discouraging memories from the first course of physics.
Dr. Greco, though, taught our class with such vibe and enthusiasm that it was hard to miss his passion for not only the subject itself, but also for teaching it to us. I thought, of all the professors at Tech, he was one of the few who really cares for us and how we perform in his class. He was a great professor and I'm glad I had him as my teacher. I hope he never gets discouraged doing the weird things he does and rock the wiki page for the world to see that WE CAN DO IT.

Sincerely,
Yoo Jin Joung
juj4040@gmail.com

Dr. Greco was my Physics II professor in the Fall of 2015. To put it concisely, he is a superstar. His lectures are entertaining, and the class is constantly prepared for upcoming assignments and tests. Dr. Greco has a kind and open personality, and is clearly passionate about his subject. I can only hope to be as passionate in public policy and biomedical engineering as Dr. Greco is with physics. It's been an honor to be taught by the man. He is an inspiration, and is most certainly deserving of any teaching award offered.

Respectfully,
c/ Mahdi Al Husseini, United States Army ROTC
BMED & Public Policy, Leadership Studies     mah9@gatech.edu

I study 2211 and 2212 with Dr. Greco. I have to say Dr. Greco is one of my favorite professors in Tech. He knows the materials well obviously, and he for real wants to teach the students some Physics instead of just finishing his job. He is very helpful and approachable when we have some questions to ask. He is the only professor I know that gives us his personal phone number and responds to my texts or calls immediately, which really helped my Physics study and stimulates my interest of physics learning. He is the best!

Ran Yi
B.S. Industrial Engineering/Computer Science     6787612705     raynayi@gatech.edu

Physics is not an easy subject to teach. I strongly believe that Dr. Greco was so successful in teaching us physics last semester because he tried to connect with us. When he walked into class, he didn't just spew out material at us, but he asked the us how we were and made jokes throughout the class. It wasn't boring.

I hope this helps!

Sincerely,
Chianne Connelly
chiannerose@gmail.com
Dr. Greco consistently provided fun and engaging lectures, and his passion for physics was always very apparent. He did a fantastic job of thoroughly covering all the necessary material, and even provided the historical background for a lot of major physics equations and developments. I'm by no means a morning person, but his lectures were well worth waking up for.

Bryan L. Lynch
GA Tech Class of ’18  bryanllynch96@gatech.edu

I had Dr. Greco for physics II last semester and wanted to recommend him for the GT teaching award he was nominated for. I found his teaching was excellent and always enthusiastic. He held the attention of the class well by being animated and friendly throughout every lecture. Explanations were always clear and I had no difficulty understanding the information he conveyed to the class. I would say Dr. Greco is one of the best professors I have had at Georgia Tech.

Zachary Goddard
B.S. Mechanical Engineering  zgoddard@gatech.edu

I took Physics 2 last semester with Dr. Greco and had a really good time studying electricity and magnetism. He emphasized a lot on learning and understanding the concepts well and gave us ample opportunities outside of class to learn, earning extra credit in the process. He is a very understanding professor, realizing the difficulties that students face and thereby cooperate with us. I hope he receives something in recognition of his work!

Yours,
Venkat Natarajan
venkat.natarajan@gatech.edu

My name is Tyrone (Luke) Qin, 2nd year biochemistry major. I took PHYS 2212 with Greco my Fall 2015 semester. Dr. Edwin Greco was an excellent professor proving his passion and knowledge for physics. A humorous man he is, he humbly brought himself down in our shoes and learning perspective to where every lecture was a true joy to attend. He is the epitome of what a college professor should be. I highly recommend this man to be a recipient of GT’s teaching award.

Tyrone Qin, 902962855
tyrone@gatech.edu

I heard that Dr Greco has been nominated for a teaching award and would like to say that of all the teachers I have had, he is the most passionate about his subject and his students. I had an exceptionally busy workload when I was taking his class but he kept me engaged throughout the semester and helped rekindle my interest in science for its own sake (and not just for a grade). I think that he absolutely deserves any award that the university may give him.

Thank you.
Thompson Bertron (Fall 2212 student)
tbertron@gatech.edu

I would like to recommend Dr. Greco for the GT Teaching Award. I had Dr. Greco for physics 2211 & 2212. Dr. Greco was a hard teacher but he was very consistent and fair. I struggled in 2211 because of the difficulty of the class but because of his consistency by time I took 2212 I was completely prepared and was very successful. I enjoyed his lectures and attend all of them, he engages the students very well and keeps the topic interesting. If I had the chance I would take more of his classes and he defiantly made me consider a change of major.

Zachary Eichelkraut
George Woodruff School of Mechanical Engineering  404-863-0006  zte@gatech.edu