## Application Summary

### Competition Details

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### Application Information

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<th>Koushyar Rajavi</th>
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<td>Koushyar Rajavi - CTL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award</td>
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### Personal Details

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<tr>
<th>Applicant First Name:</th>
<th>Koushyar</th>
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<tr>
<td>Applicant Last Name:</td>
<td>Rajavi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email Address:</td>
<td><a href="mailto:kraji3@gatech.edu">kraji3@gatech.edu</a></td>
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**Primary School or Department**

Scheller College of Business

### Application Details

**Proposal Title**

Koushyar Rajavi - CTL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award
Application for CTL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award

February 2021

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On behalf of the Scheller College of Business, I am pleased to nominate Dr. Koushyar Rajavi for **CTL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award** in recognition of his passion and enthusiasm for teaching as well as his continued record of teaching excellence.

Koushyar joined the Scheller College of Business as an Assistant Professor in Marketing after completing his PhD in 2018. Koushyar’s research expertise lies in the field of empirical marketing strategy. During his time at Georgia Tech, Koushyar has taught the core business statistics and analytics courses at both undergraduate and graduate levels. Koushyar is passionate about teaching, deeply cares for all of his students, and continuously improves his teaching skills based on students’ feedback.

When Koushyar joined Scheller, he was given the option of teaching MGT 6500 in both the full-time and evening MBA programs. MGT 6500 is the core analytical tools and statistics course which is required for all MBA students. However, it has historically been very challenging to teach MGT 6500 due to the varied analytical background of the students. As a new junior faculty, Koushyar could have opted to teach an easier undergraduate course, but instead he embraced the challenge to teach this more challenging MBA course. Since then, Koushyar has overhauled MGT 6500’s course content and structure, and has taught seven sections of MGT 6500 with great success. In fact, his evaluations for Fall 2020 and Fall 2019 have been the highest ever evaluation ratings for MGT 6500.

One of the difficulties in teaching MGT 6500 is that students have very diverse statistical and math backgrounds. This makes it challenging to appeal to every student in the class. As an example, the statistical package that previous instructors utilized in MGT 6500 (Microsoft Excel or R Programming) oftentimes led to unsatisfactory experience for a subset of students. When Excel was used by previous instructors, some advanced students felt that the class was not challenging enough and that the course needed to be updated to incorporate state of the art statistical packages. On the other hand, when instructors utilized R Programming in MGT 6500, some students who did not possess sufficient statistical and programming background felt a little lost. In his first year, after talking to previous instructors and students of MGT 6500, Koushyar decided to incorporate the Radiant software as the main statistical package for MGT 6500. Koushyar’s bold decision paid off as Radiant has become a popular statistics tool among MBA students. In addition, Koushyar has also put a lot of effort into developing supplemental tutorials and instructional videos on how students could use Excel or R Programming to conduct the same statistical analyses that are performed by Radiant in MGT 6500. Koushyar has truly gone the extra mile to provide a wonderful learning experience for all of his students.
I have been amazed by Koushyar’s dedication to continuously improve MGT 6500. After his first year of teaching, despite receiving satisfactory evaluations, he approached me to propose ideas on how he could further improve the course based on students’ feedback. He proposed that the course should switch from a full-semester course to a half-semester course to enhance students’ engagement, and based on the subsequent feedback received from students, I agree that this was a very thoughtful decision. He has further supplemented course materials with data and insights from his research related to the entertainment industry. As a result of his constant dedication for continuous improvement, along with his passion for teaching, MGT 6500 has become a popular course for all MBA students, irrespective of their prior backgrounds in mathematics and analytics.

Koushyar has also effectively pivoted to teach both courses in hybrid mode during Fall 2020 (MGT 6500 and MGT 2250). He diligently created high-quality videos for all his lectures. A vast majority of the students in his classes really appreciated the clarity, quality, and comprehensiveness of his lecture videos. In addition, he also utilized residential as well as synchronous sessions to address students’ concerns and provide additional opportunities for them to practice the concepts and techniques taught in his classes. Thus, both his undergraduate and graduate students were very satisfied by their experience with the hybrid version of his classes. Additionally, in Fall 2020 he was included in the Student Recognition of Excellence in Teaching: Class of 1934 CIOS Honor Roll.

In conclusion, Professor Koushyar Rajavi is an exceptional and passionate teacher, and seems dedicated to making a positive impact on his students’ learning process and success. Therefore, I recommend Professor Rajavi for the CTL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any further help. Thank you for considering him for this Award.

Sincerely,

Soumen Ghosh
Senior Associate Dean for Faculty and Research
Scheller College of Business
Georgia Institute of Technology
Email: Soumen.ghosh@scheller.gatech.edu
2. Reflective Teaching Statement

There is a saying that “you can’t be everything for everybody”. This might be true in the marketing context, but I truly believe that it does not apply to teaching; an instructor can and should work hard to improve each and every one of his/her students by going the extra mile and thinking about their individual preferences and needs. My teaching philosophy is based on the idea that “no student should be left behind” and I do all aspects of my teaching (e.g., course design, lectures, presentations, assignments) with this in mind. To achieve this, I focus on three principles: 1) designing and delivering the course to cater to students’ diverse backgrounds, skillsets, and learning styles, 2) stimulating interest and motivating all students, and 3) showing empathy and care for students.

“He was willing to go out of his way (go beyond what was required of him) to make sure no student was left behind in learning this subject.” [MGT6500A; Fall 2019]

Course Design and Delivery with Every Student in Mind

Since 2018 when I joined Georgia Tech’s Scheller College of Business, I have been teaching core business statistics and analytics at undergraduate and graduate levels (MGT2250 and MGT6500 respectively). The students in core courses, especially at the MBA level, come from different backgrounds with different levels of enthusiasm and preparedness for statistical topics. For example, the aggregate response to the CIOS question “rate how prepared you were to take this subject” has consistently been below 4.0 across the seven MBA sections I have taught so far, with approximately one-third of the students indicating that they were not well prepared to take the course, while the rest of the students being well prepared. Such variation in students’ readiness has posed a great challenge in teaching MGT2250 and MGT6500. While the easy solution would be to cater to the needs and preferences of the majority of students who are well prepared to take these courses, I have strived to make sure that every single student has the best learning experience. My efforts have been greatly appreciated by both my undergraduate and graduate students:

- You are honestly the best professor that I have had in undergrad and grad school. [MGT6500B; Fall 2019]
- Arguably one of if not the greatest professor I have had at Georgia Tech, so I cannot think of anything in particular that could be improved. [MGT2250C; Fall 2020]
- Dr. Rajavi was as good as an instructor we could have had. [MGT6500EMB; Fall 2018]
- Koushyar was my favorite professor this semester. His teaching was clear-cut and he did a great job explaining. [MGT6500A; Fall 2019]

For the students who are not well prepared to take a statistics course: I strive to teach statistical topics in simple words in a way that is understandable for everyone. I also make sure to communicate the relevance and practical importance of different topics by providing real-world applications of the statistical techniques and utilizing novel and recent datasets, which sometimes obtain after conducting years of academic research on a subject:

- Professor Rajavi’s greatest strength is his ability to explain tough material in an easy to understand format. For those of us with limited statistics background, his explanations were clear and effective. [MGT6500B; Fall 2019]
• Professor never overcomplicated things and made it easy for me to learn a subject I did not have any background in. [MGT2250A; Fall 2020]
• Even though I have no knowledge about analytical tools, I was able to follow the class. I am totally satisfied with this class. [MGT6500B; Fall 2019]
• Koushyar is an amazing teacher and it’s obvious that he is passionate about the subject and cares a lot. He takes what could be a dry topic with statistics and makes it extremely accessible. [MGT2250C; Fall 2020]

Taking a statistics class might be intimidating for students with little math background. In fact, many of my MBA students indicate that they have not been exposed to math, in almost ten years, since high school. Moreover, they have rarely (or never) used statistical packages before taking MGT6500. To help such students, through different avenues, I make myself available to my students almost all the time (including weekends) so that I effectively and quickly respond to their questions, address their issues, and provide feedback on their performance:

• Having a Sunday lesson to review was fantastic. [MGT6500A; Fall 2020]
• He promptly responded to all questions in class and through email. On average, he responded to emails in less than 15 min. [MGT6500EMA; Fall 2018]
• The professor was one of the most responsive professors I’ve ever had. [MGT6500EMA; Fall 2018]
• He was extremely responsive and available to help with any questions. He was also good about reviewing our work and reaching out about specific concerns that he had given our quiz results. [MGT6500A; Fall 2020]

For the students who are well prepared to take a statistics course: I have had the pleasure of having students with significant background in statistics and analytics in my classes. In fact, in my MBA classes, I have had students who were already working as data scientists before starting in the MBA program and taking MGT6500. I make sure to challenge such students by providing supplementary resources that they can use to further their understanding and learn new techniques and skills. For example, the statistical software that is used in MGT6500 is Radiant, which is easy to use for all students. Knowing that some students become proficient with Radiant faster than others, I also provide R programming tutorials that I have developed by myself. Moreover, while utilizing Excel is not a part of MGT 6500’s learning objectives, to help students who want to improve their Excel skills, I have prepared tutorials and instructional videos that thoroughly describes how students can replicate the statistical techniques learned in MGT 6500 using Excel:

• He also provided additional resources for more advanced students who wanted to learn beyond the basic materials of the class. [MGT6500A; Fall 2020]
• I could tell a lot of thought went into the supplemental materials, which I really appreciated. I found them very helpful. [MGT6500A; Fall 2019]

As a result, many students who had previously taken statistics and analytics classes during their undergraduate or graduate studies indicate that MGT6500 has been their best experience in understanding and utilizing statistical techniques:

• I took statistics as an undergraduate and have been exposed to it on a regular basis in my career before the MBA program; nevertheless, I still had no clue about it. After taking the course, my confidence in my statistical knowledge has skyrocketed. [MGT6500A; Fall 2018]
• It was not my first time learning some of this material but definitely the first time that I felt that I finally grasped it. THANK YOU! [MGT6500A; Fall 2020]
The need to cater to students’ different preferences and learning styles became even more important during the Covid-19 era. MGT2250 and MGT6500 were offered in hybrid format in Fall 2020. With some students being away from campus and in different time zones, I realized that students should have the flexibility to learn and study course materials any time they see fit, based on their own preferences. Therefore, I spent considerable time to create and edit high-quality videos for all the lectures in both MGT 2250 and MGT 6500:

- A lot of pre-recorded video lectures can be boring and I can get easily distracted, but Koushyar does an amazing job with recording the video lectures and keep me interested throughout the whole video. I cant point out anything special that he does, but he is just extremely good at explaining things at a slow, but not boring pace and I really wish more professors are able to do this! [MGT2250C; Fall 2020]
- A lot of professors are not the best at delivering online lectures that engage the student and clearly explain the subject matter. Professor Rajavi’s lectures were not difficult to follow and were comprehensive enough to not need to consult a textbook. [MGT2250C; Fall 2020]

Moreover, I complemented the lecture videos with synchronous and face-to-face review classes to help the students who had different learning preferences:

- I felt like the professor did an excellent job of delivering the material virtually while offering multiple optional touchpoints for students who were having a difficult time learning on their own. [MGT6500A; Fall 2020]

The result was that many students were extremely satisfied with design, organization, and teaching model of my two hybrid courses:

- This course was taught in the most effective manner out of all my classes and other classes should model after this one. [MGT2250A; Fall 2020]
- I think the course was extremely well organized in comparison to all of the other core classes. [MGT6500A; Fall 2020]
- The teaching model was the best out of all my classes. [MGT2250A; Fall 2020]

Stimulating Interest and Motivating Students

I believe that the instructor has a great role in motivating the students and making them interested in a subject. The instructor’s role is in my opinion even more pronounced in core courses. I believe that if students perceive their instructor as enthusiastic and passionate about teaching a class and the topics discussed in it, they will become more motivated to study and learn the subject, and if students see that the instructor cares about their success, they will strive to do better:

- Seeing a professor go of their way to do that makes me want to succeed in the class and helps me get through the tough times I might be having. [MGT2250C; Fall 2020]
- Great professor, would definitely take his class again and recommend to a friend! Always love learning from those who love to teach! Keep up the enthusiasm and helpful communication all the time. [MGT6500B; Fall 2019]
- Koushyar was a passionate instructor who genuinely cares about the success of his students. That clearly shows in every class and makes me as a student want to perform better. [MGT6500B; Fall 2019]
- Our teacher seemed incredibly eager for us to learn and his excitement made me excited. [MGT6500B; Fall 2019]
To keep my students motivated, even though on average I have about 180 students during the Fall semesters, I provide personal feedback to every one of my students on a regular basis, and this includes all the students, irrespective of their level of performance in the course:

- *First instructor to ever personally reach out and congratulate my positive progress in the course.* [MGT2250C; Fall 2019]
- *I did very poorly on the first exam, but he made it clear what to expect and what to study for the remaining two exams and that certainly helped my grade in the course.* [MGT2250C; Fall 2020]
- *Willing to reach out to students and help. He was also very encouraging regardless of the grade of my test.* [MGT2250A; Fall 2020]

**Empathy and Care for Students**

I deeply care for my students and empathize with them. I try to put myself in the shoes of every one of my students and imagine that if I now were a student, what could make it easier (or more difficult) for me to succeed in a class. For example, being a student in the Covid-19 era has undoubtedly been stressful and full of uncertainties. In order to reduce students’ uncertainties and anxieties, I was able to effectively communicate the teaching style and expectations for my hybrid classes, provide reasonable flexibility to my students, organize the course content in a manner that was easy to follow, and frequently communicate with my students about due dates and deliverables:

- *The best feature of the course was the structure. It was extremely organized and predictable compared to other classes. I knew what I needed to do every week.* [MGT2250A; Fall 2020]
- *Thanks for teaching such a straightforward and stress-free class this semester!* [thank you letter via email; Dec 7th, 2020]

Additionally, I never solely rely on my perceptions and always administer a detailed midterm survey to understand how I can better help my students. I take students’ feedback extremely seriously and work hard to improve the class according to my students’ request:

- *He was very approachable and always willing to hear feedback about the course.* [MGT 2250A; Fall 2020]
- *I appreciated Koushyar's mid-course evaluation and his willingness to make adjustments as necessary, based on class feedback. The course improved throughout the semester.* [MGT 6500B; Fall 2019]
3. Illustration of Teaching Excellence

Since joining Georgia Tech’s Scheller College of Business in 2018, I have taught seven MBA classes (n=329 students) across full-time and evening programs (MGT6500), as well as four undergraduate classes (n=194; MGT2250). All of the classes that I have taught have been core classes.

a. Course Instructor Opinion Survey (CIOS) Scores

Below I report a summary of the courses I have taught, alongside student responses to questions regarding instructor’s respect for students (instructor's respect and concern for students), enthusiasm (instructor's level of enthusiasm about teaching the course), availability (instructor's availability for consultation), and overall effectiveness (considering everything, the instructor was an effective teacher).

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<th># Students (# Responses)</th>
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<th>Enthusiasm</th>
<th>Availability</th>
<th>Overall Effectiveness</th>
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b. Examples of Student Comments from CIOS

General Comments:

- You are honestly the best professor that I have had in undergrad and grad school. You took the time to review my quizzes and make corrections on them before I had the chance to talk to you about mistakes. I enjoyed how slow you explained the material and in different views that I could understand it. You are very accommodating for those of us that needed to attend conference. Thank you for a great semester.

- Arguably one of if not the greatest professor I have had at Georgia Tech, so I cannot think of anything in particular that could be improved.

- Koushyar was my favorite professor this semester. His teaching was clear-cut and he did a great job explaining.

- Koushyar is an amazing teacher and it’s obvious that he is passionate about the subject and cares a lot. He takes what could be a dry topic with statistics and makes it extremely accessible.

- Dr. Koushyar is an excellent professor. His passion for the subject is evident in every lecture he teaches. Not to mention he is incredibly understanding of the student's other commitments, whether it be other class assignments, career events, etc. Overall great guy.

- Dr. Rajavi was as good as an instructor we could have had.

- Loved the instructor. It was clear that he loved the content of the class and respect for the students. He was very accommodating and was a wonderful professor to have. 10/10 would recommend.

- Great professor, would definitely take his class again and recommend to a friend! Always love learning from those who love to teach! Keep up the enthusiasm and helpful communication all the time.

- Koushyar is an incredible professor. He was helpful, patient and understanding. He made the subject and class very enjoyable!

Teaching Effectiveness:

- Prof Rajavi has the uncanny ability to explain very complicated statistics concepts in the most understandable manner. I took statistics as an undergraduate and have been exposed to it on a regular basis in my career before the MBA program; nevertheless, I still had no clue about it. After taking the course, my confidence in my statistical knowledge has skyrocketed.

- Professor Rajavi greatest strength was his way of explaining concepts during lecture videos, his accessibility, and understanding. He set up his class in a way that was practical and pushed me to learn. His lecture videos were clear and concise and everything was always connected. Lecture videos helped with homework and homework helped with exams. Professor Rajavi was just truly a great professor.

- Our teacher seemed incredibly eager for us to learn and his excitement made me excited.

- The greatest strength of Professor Rajavi was his clarity in the format of the class and presentation of material. Professor never overcomplicated things and made it easy for me to learn a subject I did not have any background in.

- Professor Rajavi’s greatest strength is his ability to explain tough material in an easy to understand format. For those of us with limited statistics background, his explanations were clear and effective.
• The professor was really great at explaining the material and entertaining for an 8am class.
• Engaged professor, communicated excitement about materials. Professor Rajavi utilized real
  world examples to keep the lessons relevant.
• I felt like the professor did an excellent job of delivering the material virtually while offering
  multiple optional touchpoints for students who were having a difficult time learning on their own.
• The Professor really encouraged students to ask questions in class. I was really impressed with
  the way the Professor presented the material.
• Professor Rajavi made an effort to engage the class and provide relevant examples. He clearly
  enjoys the material and that was evident in the way he taught the course.
• Rajavi’s greatest strength was going the extra mile for students. Summarising concepts and
  giving assignments that really got at the heart of why the class is mandatory.
• The instructor possesses a great ability to present the course material in an effective and efficient
  manner. It is very easy to learn when this instructor is teaching.
• The instruction was nearly perfect. I really enjoy the style of the course and the way we learned
  material. I would not change anything about how the course is constructed.
• I cannot say how instruction can be improved because everything was outstanding.

Care and Respect for Students:
• Extremely involved in making sure students succeed. I especially appreciate the feedback emails
  sent out after each test. Seeing a professor go of their way to do that makes me want to succeed in
  the class and helps me get through the tough times I might be having.
• [Instructor greatest strength]: Empathy for students. First instructor to ever personally reach out
  and congratulate my positive progress in the course.
• He was so nice and responded to emails very quickly. I could tell that he really cared about his
  students and put a great amount of effort into making this class helpful.
• He clearly cared about us and would even send personal emails which was greatly appreciated --
  especially during these times.
• [Instructor greatest strength]: That he was willing to go out of his way (go beyond what was
  required of him) to make sure no student was left behind in learning this subject.
• Very caring professor. Always walked over when students looked like they were struggling in
  class. Provided clear feedback on assignments.
• He constantly checked in on students to make sure we were doing well.
• Koushyar was a passionate instructor who genuinely cares about the success of his students. That
  clearly shows in every class and makes me as a student want to perform better.
• He is very accessible, caring, clear with directions, and helps students succeed.
• He cares for his students and is clearly very passionate about this course.
• Willing to reach out to students and help. He was also very encouraging regardless of the grade
  of my test.

Responsiveness, and Communication with Students:
• This instructor really wanted his students to succeed and you could tell. Whenever I improved my
  scores or grade, he would reach out to me and tell me good job. I think this is important
  reassurance that most college professors do not give. I am really thankful for this reassurance.
• The professor was one of the most responsive professors I've ever had.
• He promptly responded to all questions in class and through email. On average, he responded to emails in less than 15 min.
• His response rate is impeccable! He REALLY cares about what he is teaching and it shows!
• Professor Rajavi has great passion for teaching. He was very attentive and was sure to follow up on any questions or need of assistance.
• Good communication and accessibility. Having a Sunday lesson to review was fantastic.
• The greatest strength was his availability. Whenever I had a question and sent a message through Canvas, I received a response almost immediately. Another strength was that I did very poorly on the first exam, but he made it clear what to expect and what to study for the remaining two exams and that certainly helped my grade in the course.
• I appreciated that he reached out to me personally when I did not do as well on a quiz to ask if I needed anything clarified.
• He was extremely responsive and available to help with any questions. He was also good about reviewing our work and reaching out about specific concerns that he had given our quiz results.
• He was very approachable and always willing to hear feedback about the course.
• The professor was kind to send a nice message about your grade on a test if it was high. I appreciated him taking the time to do that!
• He is super quick to communicate and provide detailed explanations in answering questions.

Organization and Design of the Course:
• The teaching model was the best out of all my classes.
• This course was taught in the most effective manner out of all my classes and other classes should model after this one.
• I think the course was extremely well organized in comparison to all of the other core classes.
• The best feature of the course was the structure. It was extremely organized and predictable compared to other classes. I knew what I needed to do every week.
• I cannot think of any way that this course could be improved because it was perfect.
• Quality of course was excellent. It was well prepared and gave students ample opportunity to work to learn the subject whether a first-time student or someone working in this field.
• Even though I have no knowledge about analytical tools, I was able to follow the class. I am totally satisfied with this class.
• I liked the structure and format of the class and do not see need for any improvements.
• The lectures were very clear and very well designed. I never had a hard time finding anything on the Canvas page and I feel I understood the content of the class.
• Felt like the course was designed for all levels of knowledge in stats.

Instructional Videos:
• Online lectures were SO CLEAR! It was not my first time learning some of this material but definitely the first time that I felt that I finally grasped it. THANK YOU!
• The organization of the online lectures was spot on. A lot of professors are not the best at delivering online lectures that engage the student and clearly explain the subject matter.
Professor Rajavi’s lectures were not difficult to follow and were comprehensive enough to not need to consult a textbook.

- A lot of pre-recorded video lectures can be boring and I can get easily distracted, but Koushyar does an amazing job with recording the video lectures and keep me interested throughout the whole video. I can’t point out anything special that he does, but he is just extremely good at explaining things at a slow, but not boring pace and I really wish more professors are able to do this!
- Dr. Rajavi did an incredible job of supplying us with instructional videos of excel help along with formulaic assistance.
- Having multiple small videos was very helpful for studying because I could look up a specific topic or question I was struggling on.
- I like that video lectures are released well in advance so that I can work through them on my own pace.
- The best feature was the lecture videos which explained the material thoroughly and even stimulated further interest.

Additional Resources:
- [Course Best Aspect]: The extra resources in case we like to further deep dive into a particular subject in the future.
- He also provided additional resources for more advanced students who wanted to learn beyond the basic materials of the class.
- I could tell a lot of thought and effort went into the supplemental materials, which I really appreciated. I found them very helpful.
- Koushyar offered extra materials on Canvas that were helpful in learning the materials.
- Professor developed very helpful materials to complement the course material.
- Dr Rajavi provided a lot of different sources available online which made our lives easier when we wanted to elaborate on the subjects.

Assignments and Exams:
- The team assignments were well designed to enhance the understanding in analytics.
- I think the homework was the best feature of this course because it really drove home what we learned in lectures.
- There were an appropriate number of problems per HW. The HW was similar to the exams so it properly assessed student learning.
- The homework assignments were very helpful. Having unlimited tries, and guided practice helped me really understand what was going on.
- He reached out to me with specific details about every assignment. This helped bridge the gap created by distance learning.
- All projects were relevant and fully engaged the concepts we learned in class.
- Having the quizzes untimed was phenomenal because I got to focus on the content and not the clock.
c. Examples of Unsolicited email Comments

- (Dec 12th, 2020) “I just wanted to thank you for a wonderful semester and for providing a plethora of resources throughout the term that I know helped contribute to my success. I know that it has been a little weird not being able to teach in a normal classroom and the challenges that presents I am sure has kept you on your toes! Nonetheless, I have been able to take away several lessons from your course and just want to thank you for your enthusiastic approach to Statistics and being supportive of us all.”
- (Dec 8th, 2020) “Thank you for your amazing lectures and feedbacks and thank you for being so supportive! I learned a lot and benefited from your course! I really enjoyed this class and I’m excited to continue studying Statistics. This class solidified my decision to go deeper into Business Statistics!”
- (Dec 7th, 2020) “Thanks for teaching such a straightforward and stress-free class this semester!”
- (Dec 5th, 2020) “I want to thank you for a great semester. Your enthusiasm towards the course and compassion towards your students is incredible, and I am so glad to have been in your class this semester.”
- (Dec 4th, 2020) “I just wanted to email you and let you know that I achieved my goal of an A in the class! I started off really bad but managed to work hard and achieved my goal. Without your help, it would’ve been even harder for me to bounce back, so I just wanted to say thank you for everything.”
- (Sep 29th, 2020) “I have enjoyed this class very much so far and I look forward to learning the rest of the curriculum.”
- (Dec 10th, 2019) “I wanted to thank you for a great semester. I learned a lot about the importance of statistics and really enjoyed your class!”
- (Dec 14th, 2018) “I’d like to thank you for a great semester. Your instruction was exceptional, and I was grateful to learn a subject that could’ve been much more difficult if not taught well.”
- (Oct 9th, 2018) “I just wanted to reach out and thank you again for your flexibility with the final exam and for all your support throughout the semester. I more than likely will not be in your last class tomorrow as I’m hoping to use every hour I can on the final before I leave town. Thank you for a great (half) semester! I thought you did a really great job laying out the course and covering the material. Above all, I greatly appreciate all the support you provided through out the semester and the extra time you spent helping me better understand the material through office hours and emailed questions.”
- (Oct 7th, 2018) “I wanted to thank you again for all of your help. I really appreciate how much time you’ve dedicated to helping us learn the course material.”
- (Oct 2nd, 2018) “I want to thank you for your patience answering my questions in class and through email. I really enjoyed the topics covered in class and I learned a lot. If I have any future questions in statistics (especially multicollinearity), I will be sure to contact you.”
4. Letters of Support

Area Coordinator: Samuel Bond, Associate Professor
and Area Coordinator of Marketing, Scheller College of Business

February 2021

Members of the Awards Committee,

I am very pleased to nominate Koushyar Rajavi for the CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award. I have known Koushyar since he joined our faculty in 2018. In my role as marketing area coordinator, I have witnessed first-hand how Koushyar’s enthusiasm for education and mentorship have benefitted our area and College. Most importantly, I have seen the impact of his enthusiasm and innovativeness on the success of our students, in the classroom and beyond.

Koushyar teaches our undergraduate course in Management Statistics (MGT 2250) and our MBA course in Management Analytics (MGT 6500). These courses are extremely important to the College, as they are part of the “quantitative skills core” required of all Scheller majors. As a result, his courses draw a highly diverse, interdisciplinary enrollment that requires the instructor to adapt to a different backgrounds, needs, and learning styles. The courses also reflect the increasing importance of business analytics: A critical strength of Scheller graduates in the marketplace is their reputation for rigorous analytical training, and Koushyar’s courses are essential to that training.

Over the years, Koushyar has enhanced both the courses through constant refinement and innovation, modernizing their structure and content to emphasize hands-on data analysis and the generation of useful insights from appropriate methodological tools. A key feature of these refinements has been an emphasis on functional learning. Although his courses cover a range of statistical techniques, Koushyar focuses less on specific methods than on the skills and tools that students will require to be successful in their future coursework (and their future careers). To ensure that those skills and tools are acquired vividly and immersively, Koushyar applies each new topic to the context of a real-world business problem. He guides the students to first understand the nature the problem, then consider the appropriate tools for its resolution, and finally apply those tools rigorously and accurately. As a result of this approach, his students acquire not just the technical expertise expected of Tech graduates, but also the creativity and “thinking skills” to approach new and unusual problems in a grounded manner. This approach has resonated with our students, and the evidence of his success has been abundant. Koushyar’s exemplary student evaluations speak for themselves, and our current and former students consistently rave about the thorough preparation he instilled in them.

Koushyar’s remarkable success in the classroom is especially noteworthy given the diverse makeup of his students and the nature of his two courses. For many junior students, statistics is seen as a “requirement” but not a “favorite” topic, and it may even instill apprehension or anxiety. To address this
issue and accommodate students with different backgrounds, Koushyar designs his courses with an engaging, open atmosphere, where students feel comfortable interacting with one another, asking questions, or admitting that their understanding is incomplete. Moreover, he endeavors to provide a “customized” learning experience for students with different needs (this is especially remarkable given the size of his enrollments). For students with limited background who may need extra assistance, Koushyar provides “step-by-step” instructional videos, additional review sessions, and extended office hours. For students with prior background and interest who wish to go “beyond” the scope of the material, he has developed a range of supplementary resources (e.g., programming tutorials with sample applications). Consistent with his customized approach, Koushyar communicates individually and regularly with his students to monitor their progress and understanding, address their questions, and provide feedback on their performance. Such a high degree of individual involvement, availability, and interaction is a defining strength of Koushyar’s courses, and it is cited repeatedly (and glowingly) by his former students.

I am happy to note that the enthusiasm and beneficence Koushyar display so admirably with his students extend equally to his faculty and administrative peers. Koushyar is an exemplary organizational citizen. Among numerous examples, he has mentored two doctoral students, served on multiple area and College committees, and assisted with faculty and student recruiting. Worth special mention, Koushyar contributed heavily to the recent revision of our undergraduate Marketing Concentration; this was a laborious, but much-needed project that has resulted in the modernization our offerings and better alignment of student training with emerging marketplace needs.

In sum, I feel confident attesting that Koushyar embodies the intent of the CETL/BP Award, to identify junior faculty who “make their knowledge accessible, applicable, and exciting to the learners they connect with in their classrooms and beyond.” I am pleased and honored to support his nomination. Please feel free to contact me for any further information.

Sincerely,

Samuel Bond
Associate Professor
Area Coordinator,
Marketing Scheller
College of Business
Georgia Institute of Technology
sam.bond@scheller.gatech.edu
Dear CTL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award Committee,

It is an honor to show my support for Professor Koushyar Rajavi for the CTL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award. I was in Professor Rajavi’s Management Statistics course in the Fall of 2020. It was my first semester at Tech, and I was very overwhelmed being at a new school especially during COVID-19. I had interactions with all of my professors, but what set Professor Rajavi apart was not just his passion for the material he taught, but instead his desire to build a relationship with his students even when our class was mostly virtual.

He had about 120 students for this MGT 2250 course and hosted optional in person sessions to ask questions and go over the practice tests before our exams. The first time he hosted this session, I attended along with four other students. It was very productive as we were all asking questions and going over the practice test, and I had expressed after class that I really enjoyed the content and expected to do well on this first exam. I felt confident going into it but didn’t do as well as I had hoped. A few hours after I had submitted the exam, Professor Rajavi messaged me via Canvas asking about my performance and if there was anything in particular that he should fix about the exam. This stood out to me because even though we had only met once in person, it showed that he was a professor who really did care about the success of each of his students. Before the next exam, he sent a registration link for the review session. I was the only student to sign up. He sent me a Canvas message asking what time/day works for me for the review session, and that is when we met up again. For the next three review session after that, I was again the only student to show up. He prepared a session and came to campus for one student. I ended up achieving an A in the course even with a very low grade on the first exam, and I truly believe that without Professor Rajavi’s dedication to the success of every student, that wouldn’t have been possible.

His teaching methods were very clear and fair. We had multiple exams and a final, had homework due about once a week, submitted copies of our notes every Friday night, and wrote a short essay about the importance of statistics. Whenever I had any questions (and I remember a classmate of mine agreeing with me on this), I would message him on Canvas and receive a response almost immediately. It helps to alleviate a lot of stress with a course when you have a professor that is so quick to help you with any problems you face.

I have no doubt in my mind that Professor Koushyar Rajavi is the perfect candidate for this award. His dedication to his content and his students made him stand out and I couldn’t be more thankful and lucky to have had him as a professor. He is an excellent representative of Georgia Tech and everything that this institution stands for.

Sincerely,
Nicholas Skiouris
Class of 2023
B.S. in Business Administration
Scheller College of Business
Former Student: Lauren Gordon, Undergraduate Student, Scheller College of Business

Esteemed Award Committee,

It is with enthusiasm that I submit a letter of reference in support of Professor Koushyar Rajavi nomination for the CTL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award. I had the opportunity of meeting Professor Rajavi through the Management Statistics class (MGT 2250) during the Fall of 2020. Despite the hybrid format of class, Professor Rajavi was able to create a robust and highly personalized learning experience for me and my peers despite the challenges that came along with a virtual learning environment. When I first arrived at Georgia Tech, I had absolutely no idea what field of work I wanted to pursue in the business world. However, after taking his class, I knew without a doubt that I wanted to concentrate in Marketing and interact with data to gain a deeper understanding of how I can have a positive impact on companies and consumers.

Even though our class was mostly virtual, I always looked forward to Professor Rajavi’s class. I was constantly learning new things and being pushed outside my comfort zone to think in ways I never have before. Through the duration of Professor Rajavi’s class, I enhanced my Microsoft Excel skills, and was able to leverage those skills to draw insights from data and different statistical models. Specifically, Professor Rajavi went into great detail about the motivation behind hypothesis testing, the power of using regression analysis, the use of confidence intervals to make intelligent and informed business decisions, and a wide array of topics that have supplemented my understanding of statistics and business as a whole.

I can say without a that this class set the foundation for my career as a business professional and has equipped me with the tools to have continued success in my succeeding classes.

Professor Rajavi went above and beyond to provide our class with opportunities to engage with real world business professionals in order to gain a deeper understand of how statistics drives the modern world and how it is utilized to propel companies towards their business goals. Respectively, Professor Rajavi coordinated for a guest speaker from Chick-Fil-A to share with us how statistics plays a monumental role in his day-to-day work. The speaker shared with us how Chick-Fil-A utilizes data and analytics to gather precise measurements in order to get ahead of demand while also ensuring food safety. This opportunity enabled me to see how the knowledge that I learned in Professor Rajavi’s class is put into play in the business world so that companies can be strategic in their decision making and intelligent in how they pursue new initiatives.

During my 20 years of being a student, I have had some of the most intelligent, well-spoken, talented, and engaging professors. Professor Rajavi is one of them. Professor Rajavi’s expertise, passion, commitment to outstanding teaching, and willingness to go the extra mile is what makes him an exceptional professor. As a professor, he was very approachable and always made himself available to his students. He was prompt in response to my emails and happy to meet outside of his office hours to ensure that my questions were answered in detail. He truly cares about his students and made it a point to send announcement every week to keep students in the loop with assignments,
test, due dates, and upcoming events. All in all, Professor Rajavi’s efforts made me feel constantly supported and valued throughout the duration of my time in his class.

To conclude, I firmly believe that Professor Rajavi is the most deserving of this award and deserves recognition for his most impressive efforts and dedication. For the foregoing reason, I would like to restate my strong recommendation in support of his nomination for the CTL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award.

Lauren Gordon  
Scheller College of Business  
B.S. in Business Administration, Class of 2023
February 24, 2020

Dear CETL and BP America Award Selection Committee:

I am delighted and honored to support the nomination of Dr. Koushyar Rajavi for the CTL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award. I had the opportunity to work with Dr. Rajavi as a student in the core Analytical Tools for Decisions course during my first semester in the full-time Scheller MBA program. I was slightly hesitant about the course, given that I hadn’t done much in the realm of analytics since college. However, I instantly felt more comfortable and even excited for the course after our first class with Dr. Rajavi. His passion for the subject matter, enthusiasm to see students succeed, and willingness to work with students in a flexible, understanding way was instantly apparent.

Throughout my time in the class, I was particularly impressed with how well Dr. Rajavi communicated the material we needed to learn, but also made it interesting and relatable to the business environment. One way he did this was by incorporating his own research into the course. For example, we looked at data from research on the film industry that he had been working on and used that to learn concepts and develop insights. This made the course matter feel real and instantly useful for future roles we might have. I also must admit that as someone who had worked in the film industry previously, this was extremely fascinating!

I was additionally impressed with how well Dr. Rajavi adapted to a hybrid environment, given the complexities of COVID-19. He made the course feel flexible and adaptable and used the technology extremely well. He also was so generous with his time, providing plenty of opportunities to ask questions and also dive even deeper into the material. He also made it clear from the start that if any student was struggling, we could reach out on our own to set up time outside of class or office hours; Dr. Rajavi was truly willing to make himself available at any time in order to see us succeed. One particular example to highlight is that he even offered study sessions on Sundays before our exams, in order to make sure that we could ask him any questions that we had even in our final hours of studying. I was extremely grateful that he was willing to make himself available in that manner, but again, that is just who Dr. Rajavi is – he wants to see students learn and excel, and he’ll do whatever it takes to help them on their journeys.

Overall, I can easily say that Dr. Rajavi impacted my academic and personal development in numerous ways. As I mentioned, I felt nervous going into the course – I had not worked in a quantitative capacity in my time between college and going back for my MBA. However, throughout the semester, I found myself surprised by how much I enjoyed the material, and quite frankly the confidence I gained by working with a professor like Dr. Rajavi. His teaching style and enthusiasm made me develop an interest of and appreciation for analytics, and also instilled in me a feeling that I was capable of doing more quantitative work.

Former Student: Katherine Crosby, MBA Student (Full-time Program),
Scheller College of Business
I know that Dr. Rajavi is deserving of this award because he is an amazing teacher who shares his passion for the material with his students. I have had few professors who are as committed to seeing his students succeed as Dr. Rajavi is, and I know that I, along with my classmates, are incredibly grateful that we were able to learn from him so early in our journeys at Scheller. Dr. Rajavi is so deserving of the CTL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Award, and I know the Scheller community would be absolutely thrilled to see him recognized in this manner. He makes analytics relatable, applicable, and exciting while making the learning process accessible and enjoyable for all.

Sincerely,
Katherine Crosby
MBA Candidate | Class of 2022
Dear Selection Committee,

It is my great pleasure and honor to recommend Professor Koushyar Rajavi for the CTL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award nomination. I am an Evening MBA student that was in Professor Rajavi’s Analytical Tools for Decision (MGT 6500), which is a core class in the MBA curriculum. After being through majority of the MBA curriculum (expected graduation: Summer 2021), I can confidently say that Professor Rajavi has been my best professor at GA Tech.

As a graduate student, it had been almost 10 years since attending a classroom. The gap in my educational experience led to a feeling of added pressure that was somewhat uneasy, which was mostly due to a level of “uncertainty”. Ironically, my first semester I enrolled for MGT 6500, which was a heavily statistically based course that covered all the surrounding concepts of “uncertainty”. On the first day of class, the room was filled with approximately 40 students. As Professor Rajavi walked into the classroom, I remember grabbing my pencils, my fresh notebooks, and my new graphing calculator. When Professor Rajavi started reviewing the syllabus, my heart pounded fast considering this was my first syllabus in almost a decade. Each student had an opportunity for a brief introduction (alleviating some of my stress), which then led to the start of the class topics. Considering I had never taken any statistics/probability course, I felt overwhelmed by the material. I raised my hand and asked my first question. Unlike some of my professors in my undergraduate program, Professor Rajavi responded positively to my obvious question; his demeanor in the response led me to believe that asking questions facilitates a great learning experience within the classroom. I found myself asking more questions throughout the course.

In general, a great learning experience requires interaction among individuals in the classroom (both students and professors). There is a common misconception that a one-sided learning lecture format is truly the best approach. I have found that Professor Rajavi’s ability to answer questions and maintain a positive environment can steer the classroom into a more open conversational format. Professor Rajavi responded well by smiling and even joking with his students creating a very comfortable environment for interactions. These interactions helped me improve my confidence as I excelled through the MBA program. I carried this new approach of solving problems by asking questions into my career. Interestingly, it was the beginning of new success in my career.

Professor Rajavi was always an approachable professor that related well with his students. He was very responsive and went out of his way to ensure that the topics were understood by everyone. Most importantly, he welcomed any and all questions. Professor Rajavi had so much passion in his explanations that the course felt more like a conversational experience rather than just a traditional classroom. In hindsight, I probably took advantage of him by asking many questions throughout the course. Considering the various backgrounds of students, Professor Rajavi had a great talent to simplify such complicated concepts of statistics in a relatable manner that allowed individuals to
utilize the coursework in a practical manner. My classroom experience was so delightful that I have continued to look for his name in “buzzport” for future class registration. Once again, I highly recommend Professor Rajavi for the CTL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award nomination.

Sincerely,

Neema Atashi
MBA Candidate
Scheller College of Business
Georgia Institute of Technology
February 23, 2021

To whom it may concern:

I am delighted to write this letter of recommendation for Dr. Koushyar Rajavi’s application for the CTL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award.

I have had the pleasure of knowing Koushyar from Spring 2019. At that time, Koushyar was for the first time assigned to teach two sections of the core undergraduate business statistics course (MGT 2250, Management Statistics) for the Fall 2019 semester. Since I have been teaching MGT 2250 for several years, Koushyar approached me to start coordinating for the Fall 2019 semester, months before the semester started. We had several meetings, during which I discussed my pedagogical approach to teaching MGT 2250 and we exchanged ideas on how to further improve the course. During the meetings, I found him eager to receive new ideas, flexible, and a pleasure to work with. Even though I have been teaching MGT 2250 with great success for several years – for which I have won teaching awards in the past – the ideas that Koushyar put forth during our meetings provided me a fresh perspective to further improve MGT 2250 and enhance certain aspects of the class such as the attendance policy, organization of the syllabus, homework deadlines, etc.

Our communications continued throughout the Fall 2019 semester. Every time one of us had an idea on how to further improve the course and address students’ concerns and issues, we communicated the ideas with each other. Through surveys that we ran during the semester, we learned a lot about what worked (and did not work) for students. Even after the semester ended and having just received very positive feedback from his students, he was eager to get in touch with me to discuss how we could improve the course in future. Koushyar truly has a great passion for doing the best for his students.

I would like to point out that teaching a core statistics course is not an easy task. It requires dedication and innovative thinking to appeal to a diverse set of students who take the course. Some students dislike statistics because they don’t have strong mathematical and technological background to take MGT 2250. It therefore requires the instructor to think about innovative ways to motivate those students and put in additional effort to help them during the semester. The fact that his students rate him so highly shows that he is a gifted, innovative, and hardworking educator. Interestingly, even though he caters to the needs of those students who require additional help and motivation, he is also able to engage well and further motivate other students who already like statistics and are well prepared to take the course. For example, he provides students with additional material, sometimes based on his academic research, that are beyond the scope of the class.

For Fall 2020, given the COVID-19 situation, Koushyar and I were both asked to deliver MGT 2250 in a hybrid format. Before the start of the semester, we frequently communicated on how to organize the course. I found Koushyar extremely attentive to the different needs and learning styles of different
students. He always wanted to make sure not to leave any student behind and given the circumstances, provide the best learning experience for all his students. As a result, he provided his students with a lot of flexibility on how to succeed in MGT 2250, given their personal preferences.

Before the semester started, he spent considerable amount of time to create videos for all the lectures and edited the videos carefully and professionally. The videos that he created are concise, elaborate, and are of very high quality. Knowing that undergraduate students require discipline, he provided a detailed outline of when each and every video must be watched by the students. Having a detailed and organized structure, especially in the current stressful times, helped immensely to reduce his students’ uncertainty and anxiety. To make sure that students do not procrastinate and fall behind the schedule, he came with an innovative solution to make sure that the students pay close attention to the proposed schedule: he asked students that every week they should upload a file documenting what they learned from each week’s videos. I found this idea very clever. Moreover, he complemented his videos with face-to-face classes as well as synchronous review sessions. As a result, his students performed excellently in all three midterms, as well as the final exam. His excellent evaluation ratings are a proof that his students appreciated and welcomed his innovative, passionate, and thoughtful teaching style.

In closing, Koushyar is an outstanding instructor and I am delighted to have him as a colleague. He is a joy to work with and his ideas have been a breath of fresh air. In my long teaching career, I have rarely encountered an instructor as enthusiastic and hardworking as Koushyar. I wholeheartedly support his nomination for the CTL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award.

Sincerely,

Tatiana Rudchenko, Ph.D.
Full Time Lecturer
Scheller College of Business
Georgia Institute of Technology
tatiana.rudchenko@scheller.gatech.edu