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OFFICE OF THE PROVOST

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Professors of the Year Program Selection Committee
Council for the Advancement and Support of Education
1370 New York Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20005-4701

Dear Committee Members:

I am delighted to support the nomination of Osama Eljabiri as a Professor of the Year. For the past seven years, Osama has been a teacher and mentor for over 2000 undergraduate students at NJIT. Through his tremendous energy, personality, intelligence, leadership and management skills, he has built a unique capstone program that provides students with a multi-track, real world experience that prepares them for the job market. His role in our capstone programs and our students' professional careers is unparalleled. Prior to and in conjunction with his involvement in designing the capstone program, Osama successfully taught, developed, advised and coordinated numerous computer science, information systems and information technology courses over the last seven years receiving two excellence in teaching awards, three national nominations and one recent excellence in service nomination. His software engineering courses, in which he teaches students empirical research methods using statistical analysis through field experiments has resulted in several journal and conference peer-reviewed articles written by undergraduate students.

Six years ago, during the course of conducting a self-study of the undergraduate curricula in the College of Computing Sciences, it became clear that our computing programs lacked a capstone experience and we needed a faculty member who would take responsibility for building and running a capstone course. Osama Eljabiri, one of the special lecturers (full-time teaching faculty) in the college was identified as highly suitable for this assignment. Soon after, Osama was charged to create a team-based capstone course. Over the next several months, Osama organized and developed this course, which now runs like a virtual organization. He was able to revitalize the course into one of the most talked about multidisciplinary educational experiences at the university. In only five years, this program had success stories with more than 300 student teams and more than 250 industry, government, student entrepreneur and academic clients. This course is now required of all undergraduate computing majors (those majoring in computer science, information systems, information technology, and human-computer interaction).

In order for this program to be successful, it was necessary to train students on skills and areas of knowledge not usually covered by traditional college curriculum. Osama developed a free peer-to-peer shared learning network (capstone Open University) that focuses on hot topics in the market today and made it available to the entire community to participate as students or educators. Osama built a project management and leadership training program including two 3-credit courses as a foundation for a

project management concentration for the first time at NJIT. Osama expanded this experience to include a university-wide multidisciplinary project course that allowed students from five university colleges to be part of this experience and work as teams to solve interdisciplinary complex real-world problems. Osama also expanded the program to include a university/industry/alumni support board, a fast career development track, numerous web tools and an evolving graduate version to include advanced advisors.

The projects are solicited from industry sponsors and participating firms range from startups located in NJIT's business incubator facility to Fortune 500 companies, government agencies, and nonprofits. The design of the program require project sponsors to be intimately involved with the student teams and provide their own company liaison to guide the teams and provide them the knowledge application context knowledge. Not only does Osama identify and solicits all of the potential project sponsors, but he also establishes strong relationships with these sponsors as well as with the assigned staff members.

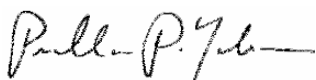
Osama evolved the program to include more than six tracks including industry, research, entrepreneurship, project management, strategic management and teaching tracks. Through the entrepreneurship track more than ten teams were able to initiate their own businesses through the "entrepreneurship teams" track. Furthermore, Osama evolved the capstone program to include a unique real world project-based learning experience for high school students with emphasis on leadership, interdisciplinary skills and strategic problem solving methods using Six Sigma methods.

The course is regarded as a complete success by students and corporate sponsors alike. At the conclusion of each semester, the teams present their projects at a showcase event. The feedback on the course and the educational experience from students and sponsors has been uniformly and wholeheartedly enthusiastic. This is attributed to Osama's teaching skills and personality. Osama has demonstrated incredible management and organizational skills as well. It goes without saying that he is hard-working and dedicated to his course and his students. He is totally devoted to his students and their learning. He establishes a dialogue with each student at the start of the semester. This dialogue is immediate and ongoing, with email exchanges that go on every day until very late at night.

The capstone program has received praise from students and students' organizations and across the university as well as financial support from industry and government. Osama has built an unprecedented support structure of strategic partners, alumni and advisors from industry and across many departments at NJIT. The program is so in demand that more half of newly proposed projects are rejected because of over capacity. Simply put, Osama is an outstanding educator.

It is a common knowledge on our campus that without Osama's energy and creativity, the course would not have become the great success that it is. We would be thrilled if Osama's accomplishments in creating and growing the capstone course, expanding it to include disciplines outside the computing sciences while maintaining its high quality, providing an outstanding industrial experience and mentorship to NJIT students over an extended period of time would provide the basis for recognizing him as a Professor of the Year.

Sincerely,



Priscilla P. Nelson, PhD
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs