

Dear Award Committee Members,

I am writing this personal reflection letter to express my enthusiastic support for Dr. Suzana Dragičević's nomination for the Eric Crighton Mentorship Award. Her supervision had a profound impact on my PhD research and into my personal life and career. I know that I would not be the person I am today without her. I could repeat ad nauseam all the boilerplate supportive comments a student would have for their amazing supervisor, but I would like to instead use this space to give some examples of what made Suzana the mentor I hope I can be to others one day.

The first example is the feedback she gave on our work. While my friends would complain about their draft papers being with their supervisor for over a month, Suzana would provide near instant feedback. I think one time I sent a draft at the end of the day, and she had returned it the next morning, with more feedback than my friends would ever receive. She had a special talent for providing very detailed and insightful feedback, while never making us feel bad about our mistakes. The amount of effort she put into her feedback really showed that she cared about helping us grow as researchers, and not just about picking out our errors. I still remember trying to decipher some of her handwritten notes in the margins.

The second example is in how she pushed us to do our best, while also knowing when to pull back. It is easy for a supervisor to push their students hard, but it is hard for a supervisor to hold back and go easy on their students. Suzana was very aware of what other commitments we had, such as teaching, and adjusting expectations accordingly. I remember one time I had a very busy couple of months between teaching, research, and submission deadlines. I knew I was close to my breaking point, so I went to Suzana expecting I would have to convince her that taking a Friday off was a good idea, because really, time off when you are busy is not always the best idea. Instead, she instantly agreed. It was such a minor conversation that I doubt she would remember it today, but it meant a lot to me. It gave me a day to relax and recharge and come back on Monday ready to give it my all. I know this is just a single day off, but there are countless examples of her compassion I could have used.

My last example is really a collection of examples about how caring she was of her students. Our TA salary was notoriously low for how expensive Vancouver is to live in, so she always gave us a little extra from her grants to help reduce our financial stress. She would bring treats to the lab, especially around holidays. We would come to the lab in the morning, and everyone had a box of chocolates at their desk. She knew I loved these hazelnut almond nougat chocolates that were to die for. She would invite us over for dinner or go to our favourite Italian pizzeria. She also made really good cakes; the cake she made for my graduation lunch had a big "DR" on it. I was a long way from home during my PhD, and sometimes it felt like she was my second mom. I'm not sure I have told her that.

There is so much more I could say than this one page can fit. I could talk about how she helped me start my career at Esri Canada as a Spatial Data Scientist, or how she runs the Esri Canada GIS Centre of Excellence at SFU with Shiv Balram. I could talk about how she helped introduce me to people at conferences and knew exactly where to publish our work. However, I think my three examples are ways that she most importantly stands out among all the other amazing scholars and supervisors you will receive nominations for. She was more than just a supervisor, she was a mentor, a life coach, a therapist, a role model, and overall, an amazing person. I can't think of anyone more deserving of this award.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A. Smith".

Dr. Alex Smith, PhD
Spatial Data Scientist, Esri Canada
asmith@esri.ca
January 29, 2025

January 27, 2025

Dear CAG Awards Committee,

It is with pleasure that I provide a letter of support recommending Dr. Suzana Dragicevic for the 2025 Eric Crighton Mentorship Award. I was a graduate of student of Suzana's for both my MSc (2005) and PhD (2009) in the Spatial Analysis and Modelling Lab in the Department of Geography at SFU.

I am currently an Associate Professor of Geography at the University of Victoria. One of the strongest aspects of my job application when I was searching for employment was my publication record. Since day one of graduate school at SFU, I had told Suzana that I was interested in becoming an academic, and she made it clear the importance of publishing. I can recount the many versions of my manuscripts that were passed between us until she was certain they were of high publication quality in both content and presentation. She spent countless hours with me on my writing to improve my ability to communicate science to broader audiences. The fact Suzana's publication record is dominated by papers with her as second author is no mistake. She spends the same effort on all her students and gives them all equal opportunity to publish their research. In this vein, Suzana puts her students' interests before her own, and does so for her desire to see them succeed.

From a funding perspective, Suzana assisted me with my application for an NSERC graduate student fellowship, of which I received on my first application. Not only did Suzana help me improve this application, but she also spent considerable time teaching me about grant writing in the process. Thanks in part to Suzana's efforts, I feel I possess the ability to write engaging and fundable grant applications. Her insistence on clarity in writing and high research impacts in grant applications has stuck with me over the years, producing numerous federally funded projects in my current job.

Suzana is also a compassionate advisor and takes her responsibilities as a graduate supervisor to heart. During my graduate training, she spent considerable time obtaining funding to allow my graduate colleagues and myself in the lab to travel to multiple conferences a year, and to be hired as a graduate research assistant during the summer months. This allowed us to focus on our research during the summer and, as a result, led to very respectable completion times. This supervisory model of Suzana helped me to complete my masters in 1.5 years and my PhD in just under 4 years.

I have tried to employ the same supervisory approach in my own lab at the University of Victoria. The advantage has been that students under my supervision are very productive and are completing their theses in shorter-than-expected completion times. The challenge, I have quickly realized, is that this approach takes much time, effort and patience. I now fully appreciate the dedication of Suzana as a supervisor to all her graduate students.

Thank you for the opportunity to consider Suzana for this award. She is truly a fantastic individual to whom I owe much of my success.



Christopher Bone, Associate Professor
Department of Geography, University of Victoria
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Lan Qing Zhao
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2025-01-27



Chair of the CAG Awards Committee
Canadian Association of Geographers

Dear Members of the CAG Awards Committee,

I am writing to express my strong support for the nomination of Dr. Suzana Dragicevic for the Eric Crichton Mentorship Award by the Canadian Association of Geographers. As a former master's student in Dr. Dragicevic's lab at Simon Fraser University (SFU) and now a PhD student at University of Waterloo, I can confidently say that her mentorship has been a key part of my academic journey.

Dr. Dragicevic has been instrumental in shaping my academic career, beginning during my undergraduate studies at SFU. Her mentorship became invaluable when I was considering pursuing a master's degree. She patiently guided me through the various options and offered me her insights on thesis-based versus course-based programs. Her support and guidance helped me make an informed decision to pursue a thesis-based master program at SFU and provided me with the opportunity to work in her lab. The significance of her mentorship to my academic career cannot be overstated. Dr. Dragicevic goes above and beyond to ensure the success of her students. Her kindness, patience, and willingness to help are evident in her interactions with all her students.

Throughout my two years of research under her supervision, Dr. Dragicevic has always been exceptionally responsive and accommodating. She has readily made herself available, even during late hours, to discuss the research progress, and has made specific plans for my academic journey as a young researcher. Thanks to her mentorship, I was able to secure scholarships such as the NSERC-Master scholarship and many other awards. Most importantly, before working with Dr. Dragicevic, I never thought I would be capable of doing research and pursuing a master's degree. Dr. Dragicevic not only led me to the completion of my master's degree but also provided me with significant guidance in applying for and choosing a doctoral degree program.

Dr. Suzana Dragicevic exemplifies the qualities of an outstanding mentor, and I wholeheartedly support her nomination for this well-deserved recognition. Her dedication, professionalism, and commitment to the success of her students make her a worthy recipient of this honor.

Thank you for considering my support for Dr. Dragicevic's nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Lan Qing Zhao".

Montreal, January 30, 2025

Selection Committee

The 2025 CAG Eric Crighton Mentorship Award

Canadian Association of Geographers

Welland RPO Rose City, ON, L3B 6G9

To whom it may correspond:

I am writing this letter to support **Dr. Suzana Dragicevic's** candidature for the 2025 **CAG Eric Crighton Mentorship Award**. Upon my arrival in Canada in July 2006, I began my doctoral studies under the supervision of Dr. Dragicevic. Throughout my journey in graduate studies, she was always very supportive and she was continuously a source of career inspiration. Dr. Dragicevic not only encouraged me to establish clear research goals but also assisted in refining my research questions. Her dedication to nurturing my academic growth and providing opportunities for scholarly development was nonstop. I received support to participate in national and international conferences and was also encouraged to serve as a guest speaker in various academic settings. Additionally, Dr. Dragicevic showed great support when I expressed interest in enhancing my teaching skills through sessional teaching at SFU.

Dr. Dragicevic's exceptional advisory skills, along with her tenacious efforts and time invested in supervising my PhD research, made possible the completion of my PhD within four and a half years. This effort resulted in the publication of five peer-reviewed papers, marking a significant milestone in my academic journey. Her consistent review of my work, in conjunction with our regular meetings and continuous discussions, comprehensively prepared me for success in my career. While I initially anticipated our relationship would conclude upon the completion of my PhD, I soon discovered that Dr. Dragicevic remained dependably available whenever I sought professional guidance during my postdoctoral positions. Her dedication to her students has become a guiding principle for me, especially during the time I transitioned into the role of university professor at the University of Montreal. At present, I maintain regular communication with Dr. Dragicevic, who continues to offer invaluable advice, particularly regarding research grants. Furthermore, we continue to actively explore avenues to collaborate on research topics of mutual interest.

I would like to conclude this letter by expressing my sincere gratitude for the exceptional guidance, care, and dedication of my graduate supervisor. Her mentorship has undoubtedly been a key factor in shaping my professional success, and I truly appreciate the invaluable support she provided throughout my academic journey.

Sincerely,



Liliana Perez, PhD

Professeure-agrégée / Associate Professor

Responsable du programme D.E.S.S. en géomatique et cartographie dynamique

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Dear Award Committee,

It is my pleasure to provide a personal reflection letter supporting the nomination of Dr. Suzana Dragicevic for the *2025 CAG Eric Crighton Mentorship Award*. I completed both my M.Sc. (2013-2015) and Ph.D. (2015-2019) in the Spatial Analysis and Modeling Lab in the Department of Geography at Simon Fraser University (SFU) under the supervision of Suzana. At the time of my graduation, I was awarded the *2019-2020 SFU Governor General Gold Medal* and the *2020 AAG William L. Garrison Award for Best Dissertation in Computational Geography*. I was offered a tenure-track faculty position just before the defense of my PhD dissertation. I am presently an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography and Geoinformation Science at George Mason University and am on track to be tenured by Fall 2025. These achievements were made possible by Suzana's outstanding supervision and mentorship, setting me up with a foundation for success in my own career.

Suzana's mentorship offered me a roadmap, helping me to navigate the joys and challenges of graduate studies juggling research, teaching, and service. She taught me the skills I needed to formulate, implement, and publish groundbreaking scientific research in esteemed journals, conference proceedings, and books. Her success as a mentor was reflected in my strong publication record upon graduation, with 16 accepted publications. Suzana provided me with the staggering opportunity to present our research at over 15 different conferences. Such experiences provided networking, professional development, and engagement with the broader scientific community. It was at these conferences that I built professional relationships that would eventually lead me to my position at George Mason University now.

Suzana encouraged me to apply for a variety of scholarships, awards, and engage in other academic challenges. She acted as a referee, providing iterations of constructive feedback and guidance in the application process. Not only did this help me to develop the skills needed for writing future grant applications, but as a graduate student, I received over \$160,000 in scholarships. Even as a fully funded graduate student, Suzana encouraged me to take up several teaching assistant and sessional instructor positions. With Suzana as a mentor, I was able to develop my own pedagogical approach and began to build some of my own courses from the ground up that I still use in my teaching today. As a teaching assistant for one of her courses, I was able to develop my own skills in mentorship and advising as I helped guide undergraduate students through collaborative research projects.

Suzana is a compassionate advisor. She makes the wellbeing of her students a priority and encourages her students to develop a healthy work-life balance. Suzana created space to celebrate our accomplishments together outside the lab, hosting lunches or dinners on special occasions. Her mentorship does not end with the graduation of her students. Even now, 5 years since graduating, her door has always been open when I need advice. She has inspired me as an advisor and mentor, and I strive to have the same level of patience, dedication, and passion in advising my own students. To summarize, I cannot think of anyone more deserving than Dr. Suzana Dragicevic for the *2025 CAG Eric Crighton Mentorship Award*. Please let me know if there is anything else that I can provide.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Ta'.

Taylor Anderson, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, GMU