



Georgia Tech · Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts
School of Modern Languages

To: 2022 CTL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award Review Committee
From: David J. Shook, Interim Chair
Date: February 3, 2022
Re: Dr. Natalie Khazaal, nominee

I am writing this letter in my role as Interim Chair, School of Modern Languages, to nominate Dr. Natalie Khazaal, Assistant Professor of Arabic, for consideration towards the 2022 CTL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award.

Dr. Khazaal came to us in Fall 2019 after serving seven years in a tenure-track role at her previous institution. Prior to her first year as GT faculty, 2019-2020, Dr. Khazaal was awarded a fellowship offered through the Luce/American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS) Program in Religion, Journalism & International Affairs for the project "Arab Apostates: Media and the Making of a Defiant Minority." The fellowship provided replacement salary, and thus she did not teach any courses during that academic year. In her second year, she taught a total of 3 courses, two in Fall 2020 (serving a total of 15 students) and one in Spring 2021 (2 students total) given her course release as Program Director in ARBC. For Fall 2021, she taught one class with 14 students and, this Spring 2022, she has 18 students across a 1.5 course teaching load. In analyzing Dr. Khazaal's record of instruction at GT, one must take into account the COVID-19 pandemic switch to online instruction (part of Spring 2020, Fall 2020 and Spring 2021): her CIOS scores reported are high, but student numbers of enrollment and response are indeed low given the confluence of the pandemic and her relatively new arrival at GT. However, Dr. Khazaal did bring to GT a repertoire of courses in Arabic Studies and International Studies from over 17 years at her previous positions and is currently under work to revise our ARBC curriculum in ways to enhance the appeal and content in ways that will increase interest and opportunities here.

As one peruses her list of classes taught at GT as well as her own personal review of her experiences in our classrooms, one readily observes her intrinsic goals of offering a diverse range of classes in order to expand on the cultural competency, international awareness, and critical thinking skills teaching of our students. An observation of her ARBC 2001 during Fall 2001 by fellow ML faculty members produced a positive evaluation of the instruction displayed, especially in terms of student interaction; in short, the evaluators remarked that Dr. Khazaal strives to consistently offer "a successful, well-planned class session that achieve(s) the aims of the lesson plan".

Dr. Khazaal has produced and collaborated on several publications related to the instruction of Arabic, specifically her co-authorship of the 2006 and 2007 *Ultimate Arabic* textbooks and her series of "Project-based learning" presentations at professional meetings. This work aligns well with her current work on revising the ARBC curriculum as a whole at GT, which gives her a proven track record in Arabic language pedagogy work.

Beyond her excellence in teaching, Dr. Khazaal has pursued an intense and successful research agenda, publishing three referred book chapters and a book introduction; she has co-edited a collective volume,

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forthcoming; and she has submitted one article for publication to a peer-reviewed journal. During this same time period, she has offered three invited talks both on and off campus. Dr. Khazaal received Georgia Tech's 2020 Faces of Exclusive Excellence Award and the 2019-2020 ACLS/ Luce Research Fellowship (2019-2020) and has served as a peer reviewer for a journal, also.

Additionally, despite her position as Assistant Professor, Dr. Khazaal's participation in service to the School, College and the Institute has indeed demonstrated considerable effort in this area. Dr. Khazaal took on the role as the Director of the interdisciplinary Middle Eastern and North African Studies (MENAS) minor while also serving as the Arabic program director; she began as co-director for GT's Project Go in Fall 2021. As Director of MENAS minor, Dr. Khazaal has led curriculum development and promotion for MENAS Minor Program through a wide variety of events and activities.

In conclusion, I believe Dr. Khazaal to be an inspirational model to colleagues as an instructor who strives to build coursework and learning experiences that will benefit all levels of students in their individual pathways towards mastery in Arabic language learning and the learning of Arabic cultural practices. In all her work, Dr. Khazaal truly pursues excellence for the betterment of her students, and thus I am happy to nominate her for this award.

Teaching Reflection

Natalie Khazaal

Georgia Tech is a unique school as it doesn't require students to take any language to fulfill a specific number of credits, unlike almost every other US higher-ed institution. That's why it is my passion and privilege, as an educator at the School of Modern Languages, to attract students to our Arabic classes, and to inspire them to learn Arabic and engage with Arab culture. In addition, I always strive to impart on them the most valuable skill that the humanities can offer technically inclined students—how to evaluate the social role of technology. Technology can be both political and neutral, biased and unbiased, and it can have unintended consequences. Therefore, helping students to explore the human aspects and social implications of technology is the most rewarding part of my experience with our students in the media courses I teach. The regular positive feedback I receive from students, the 650 % increase in student enrollment for the second time I'm teaching ARBC 3813/ML 2500, and receiving 4.8 / 4.9 /5.0 on question 19 of all student evaluations demonstrate the benefit my classes and teaching methods confer to our students.¹

My commitment to becoming a visionary for Project-Based Learning in the language classroom

For the three years that I have been working at Georgia Tech, I have aspired to become a visionary and a leader in making language education more relevant to our more technically inclined students by introducing Project-Based Learning (PBL) to the language classroom. I've created and tested a model for Project-Based Learning (PBL) in the advanced language classroom—a student-centered, semester-long project in the target language integrated with courses on media and business Arabic, utilizing multimedia, creative thinking, and teamwork. Students at technical institutions typically have some experience with PBL in their engineering classes, and they are often aware of its benefits as a time of apprenticeship. Yet, PBL hasn't been applied to language education as a systematic approach; therefore, the goal of my innovation is to place Modern Languages and Georgia Tech as trendsetters in content-based foreign language education. I'm also invested in making Tech's Arabic program a leader in national foreign language education, following Goal 1 of ML's Strategic Plan for 2020-25 to “enhance access to advanced language learning and intercultural studies and strengthen recognition as a national leader in cross-cultural humanities education with a career orientation.” That's why, during my time here, I have taught the majority of my classes using PBL and developing methods to apply it successfully to the language and humanities classroom. As this student comment (and many more, see below) show, this method has greatly benefited students, “I believe that this applied method of instruction is very conducive to learning.”

For instance, applying PBL has helped me develop and teach two language courses as content courses conducted in the target language of Arabic. In the first course—Contemporary Arab Culture: Business Arabic—students advertised Georgia Tech to peers in the Arab world (e.g., Lebanon) to create exchange channels between Georgia Tech and the Middle East, by way of a multimedia website, an Instagram ad, and an email campaign targeting Lebanese high schools and universities. Such course design is meant to apply ML's goal to “sustain and leverage the school's extensive international reach and its support of the institute's priority to

¹ Enrollment in fall 2020 was 6, this semester (spring 2022), it's 39. Because I'm only allowed to teach 1.5 credits this semester, I asked our part-time instructor, Ahmed Ahmed, to co-teach my course with me.

‘educate good global citizens’” (thus, also applying Goal #4 in Georgia Tech’s Strategic Plan). I designed the second course—Media and the Middle East—around undergraduate student research on the link between Arab television viewing habits and the social integration of the Arab diaspora in the Atlanta area. Based on interviews with diaspora members, students produced a podcast series accessible to the local Arab community, thus serving ML’s Goal 3: “leverage the Atlanta factor and inclusive community engagement.” The latter course involves extensive interactions with local Arab communities. The outcome (deliverable) of the project was an argument-based, data-driven report (presented in the podcast series) about whether the new technological and program directions taken by the regional Arab television industry fit the needs of the Arabic speaking community in the Atlanta area. Both courses gave students significant insights into the the social role of technology and its consequences. The rest of my courses are also fully or in great part designed around PBL projects.

My commitment to student engagement and interaction in the classroom

I am trained in communicative, proficiency-based language instruction and assessment, as articulated by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). The Arabic classes I teach are therefore innovative because they combine cultural appreciation, knowledge, and skills (e.g., recognizing and reproducing the cultural, generic, and linguistic norms of Arabic speaking & writing). Yet, the most important characteristic of my teaching style is that I design my language and cultural classes to help form a community of learners and a sense of student control to enhance learning outcomes. A supportive atmosphere, sense of shared purpose, cooperative approach (student-to-student interaction), and close attention to individual student achievement help my students feel at the center of the learning process, learn more quickly, and become better teachers to themselves and their classmates. The combination of issue-based and language-skill-based courses that I teach contribute to broadening the Arabic program beyond language, which attracts a pool of students from across majors and provides a service to the whole institute. The low-pressure atmosphere and the student-student interaction always receive praise in student evaluations and personal conversations with students as in these comments,

- “Applied language in a low-pressure, immersive (project work) environment. ENJOYABLE and rewarding.”;
- “[...] very much appreciate the patience this instructor displayed in allowing us to speak at our own pace without rushing us or correcting us when we are not perfectly proficient. Being rushed or interrupted is not constructive, so it is wonderful that this instructor does not put those sorts of pressures upon us. for me, the low-pressure structure meant that I could focus on learning and proficiency instead of "passing tests". there is a big difference between language proficiency and "getting an A on an exam.";
- “I loved how interactive the class was and how there are so many opportunities to practice speaking”
- “The in-class discussions were the best part of the course; I loved talking with everyone about the deeper meanings behind the movies.”

My objective as a professor of Arabic language, literature, and culture is twofold. First, I respond to the needs of students for developing intellectual capacities and acquiring broad

knowledge. I strive to inspire intellectual curiosity, foster critical thinking, and imbue valuable skills in the pursuit of a fulfilling career. Second, I strive to respond to students' diverse background within which they frame their sense of social responsibility. I aim to involve them in dialog to better understand other cultures and worldviews and contribute to the enrichment of their own community, our multicultural society, and global citizenship. I therefore continuously reevaluate my teaching philosophy and curriculum, including with the help of student feedback from midterm evaluations, to ensure that my teaching and my students' learning are always effective.

The task-based and goal-oriented class activities and homework assignments I design boost motivation, develop skills, and test proficiency in description, analysis, and argument using Arabic. My integral approach to language learning provides my students with well-rounded experience in communication through speaking, listening, writing, and reading and involves standard Arabic and Lebanese dialect, as this student comment attests to, "Really think my language reading, speaking and comprehension have all improved tremendously." Language classes offer multiple opportunities to encounter another culture in a low-pressure environment; that's why I infuse language classes with cultural learning. In addition, the smart use of computers, multimedia, the internet, and other technologies facilitates these goals. As a result, they have consistently exceeded requirements, and their command of the material has proven equal or superior to that of students from other first-rate national institutions.

The cultural classes I teach where students reflect on and compare experiences, norms, and biases from different cultural traditions help them develop deep insights about diversity, identity, and justice, and think through issues synergistically. I try to motivate my students to discover not only the ruptures among cultures and ages, but also the continuities. I have taught multiple courses with high impact that help students develop their intellectual capacities such as lower and upper division seminars, writing-intensive courses, capstone courses, and critical thinking seminars. The class activities in these courses are organized to foster intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, student confidence with skills and intellectual capacities, self-reflection, collaboration in class and field work, activities that normally are not requested of students such as creative projects, and sustained student-student and professor-students dialog, as these student comment demonstrate, "I loved talking with everyone about the deeper meanings behind the movies."; "Find this class fun, intellectually stimulating and interesting—which makes me want to learn."

My classes combine the core objectives of liberal arts education to develop students' intellectual curiosity and critical thinking with activities that require regular and meaningful self-reflection. For example, in classes on Arab media students reflect on their own growth in one section of their midterm argumentative paper or by comparing an early assignment and their final assignment, where they address questions on the meaning of the course content, their own personal and educational growth, and the application of their new insights to their future learning or career, as this student comment shows, "Out of the 'comfort zone' in using and creating multimedia assignments. Learned useful presentation skills."

In addition to strictly analytical projects like argumentative writing, my students also engage in creative projects. For example, after exploring the rendition of Arab history in movies from around the world, their cultural stereotypes, and the circumstances that produce such portrayals, students in my "Arab History on Film" class create a responsible representation of Arab history by authoring two movie scenes. This creative part of their final assignment is coupled with two analytical parts—students design, conduct, and record an interview with a

classmate about the historical film script (scenes) she or he has created pressing on issues of historical responsibility and write a review of another classmate's scenes assessing their impact and historical responsibility. The goal is to offer students an actual experience of treating Arab history more responsibly, not simply criticize those who do not.

I also regularly require that my students engage in collaboration during class and field work to form learning communities. Those incorporate the class as a whole when at the end of the semester students synthesize disciplinary knowledge and generate their own collaborative class definition of "historically responsible film" or "democratic media," for example. In other instances, students form smaller learning communities (2-5 members) and engage in substantial off-campus experience. For instance, students in my class on minorities select local organizations representing a different minority (including a local Islamic center and/or school), participate in its events as observers, and interview its members to map local minority groups. This learning experience is accompanied by collaborative pre-reflection and post-reflection assignments added to their ongoing journal, a presentation to the class, and the creation of a short film about the insights the class derived. Class content fosters engagement with diversity and multiculturalism too. For instance, exploring how world films engage Arab history addresses both US diversity (representations of Arab Americans in Hollywood, hiring African-, Indian-, or Arab-American actors, directors, etc.) and various cultures (Arab, Israeli, US, French, Scandinavian, Spanish, Mexican, Indonesian), while my class on minorities explores diversity from the perspectives of ethnicity, gender, religious conviction, ability, sexuality, species, and class.

I have learned to deeply appreciate and enjoy the close relationship of mentoring and support that develops between teachers and students. Extensive dialog and professor and peer feedback encourages and benefits my students. My class organization (e.g., learning communities, off-campus experience with local minorities) improves students' ability to work well with others, recognize and validate diverse perspectives, and develop deeper sense of civic responsibility.

My commitment to student engagement in the classroom shows clearly in the student evaluations of all my classes at Georgia Tech and the students' comments on my teaching:

"I believe that this applied method of instruction is very conducive to learning."

"She is very passionate and very invested in the success of the students! "

"I learned a lot. Pleasant learning experience. I am finally able to retain and apply the language in a conducive manner. Was struggling with Arabic, despite great motivation and interest in learning, until this class. Happy to learn the Lebanese dialect. Learning to understand Egyptian (in beginner Arabic) was helpful but personally have a greater interest in the Levantine dialect. Having the instructions / conversation repeated in English was tremendously helpful. Especially appreciate that the vocabulary list was recorded on an audio file so that proper pronunciation could be mastered."

"She was always willing to provide resources and assistance to the class."

"The final project was an excellent way to actively learn more of the Arabic language"

"Applied language in a low-pressure, immersive (project work) environment. ENJOYABLE and rewarding."

"Major strengths -- knowledge of subject matter and advance preparation plus the low-pressure environment. Also very much appreciate the patience this instructor displayed in allowing us to speak at our own pace without rushing us or correcting us when we are not perfectly proficient. Being rushed or interrupted is not constructive, so it is

wonderful that this instructor does not put those sorts of pressures upon us. for me, the low-pressure structure meant that I could focus on learning and proficiency instead of "passing tests". there is a big difference between language proficiency and "getting an A on an exam".

“I loved how interactive the class was and how there are so many opportunities to practice speaking”

“I loved all the conversations in person and the extreme efforts Dr. Khazaal went to in order to help us succeed.”

“She was always willing to provide resources and assistance to the class.”

“The professor is very enthusiastic and is always willing to explain things. She is very helpful in office hour meetings.”

“The in-class discussions were the best part of the course; I loved talking with everyone about the deeper meanings behind the movies.”

“Your greatest strength was all of the enthusiasm and knowledge you brought to our discussions. You are very good at moderating the flow of discussion!”

“Enjoyable class. Easy, engaging, fun. Out of the "comfort zone" in using and creating multimedia assignments. Learned useful presentation skills.”

“Find this class fun, intellectually stimulating and interesting -- which makes me want to learn. Also, a comment about grading, which I really appreciate: low stakes, high opportunity really shifts my focus to learning as opposed to training to pass a test.”

“Really think my language reading, speaking and comprehension have all improved tremendously.”

[instructor greatest strength] “Being able to tailor the course to the needs of the students on a specific/individual basis; this way, maximized use of course materials in teaching students and helping students retain information”

“Really great course content and instruction.”

My commitment to linking my research and my teaching to become an intellectual leader in Arabic studies

I have relied on my skillset and classroom experience as an Arabic instructor to shed light on language pedagogy, with several notable publications in that field. Both editions of my co-authored textbook *Ultimate Arabic*, published by Random House (2006, 2009), are used by high schools, colleges, and the general public (e.g., Purdue University). Its strength, compared to other Arabic textbooks, is its unique approach to Arabic learning, providing a one-stop shop for standard Arabic and the four most common dialects. Users interested in or traveling to several Arab countries find the separation into different dialects particularly useful. A second publication on Arabic pedagogy—my article “Arab Studies and the Mi‘raj of Post-ACTFL Technologies” (*Al-Arabiyya Journal*, American Association of Teachers of Arabic, Georgetown UP, 2012)—addresses the essential role of technology in redefining Arabic away from the skill-based education model and toward a comprehensive enterprise involving knowledge, dispositions, and skills. The article contributes to redefining the humanities through an emerging critical body of post-ACTFL scholarship by drawing theoretical models for application in critical languages. I was invited to present this work at Columbia University.

In addition to my intellectual leadership in Arabic pedagogy, I integrate my scholarship in Arabic media, minorities, and war into all cultural classes I’ve created and taught for Georgia Tech: courses on television research, war film, and digital media advertising.

Finally, as the only tenure-stream Arabic faculty at Tech and the director of the Middle Eastern and North African studies minor and the Arabic program, I've worked to ensure that these programs align with the interests and goals of students at a technical institution like GT.



To the selection committee,

By this letter, I would like to lend my strongest support to Dr. Natalie Khazaal’s nomination for the 2022 CTL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award. Dr. Khazaal is Assistant Professor of Arabic at the School of Modern Languages. A scholar of Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies, she teaches classes on all aspects of the Arabic language and culture, with a particular focus on Arab media, patterns of disenfranchisement, diversity and sustainability, as well as globalization. Her distinguished scholarship on Arab media (she authored a monograph on television, language and gender in wartime Lebanon, and she received a prestigious ACLS/Luce Program Fellowship in Religion, Journalism, and International Affairs in 2019) crucially informs her teaching. As I will elaborate below, her contributions in the Foreign Language and Culture classroom are innovative, highly relevant in educating our students as cross-culturally competent individuals, conceived in the understanding that language and culture instruction should always go hand in hand, and thus highly deserving of this award. I am also basing my observations and arguments on an observation of Dr. Khazaal’s teaching (in person) in the Fall of 2021.

Let me indeed begin with a close-up perspective of how I experienced Dr. Khazaal’s ARBC 2001 class last fall. She is a highly energetic, enthusiastic teacher whose work in the classroom is exemplary of the effort of bridging (or avoiding altogether) the ostensible “gap” between “language” and “culture” in the FL classroom. To teach culture from day one of foreign language instruction has famously emerged as one of the central argument of the 2007 Modern Language Association (MLA) Report on Foreign Languages. The course that I observed was rich in offering the learners authentic material in the target language that was steeped in cultural information that would be important and informative to Arabic learners at Tech – her class on that day was based on the overarching topic of apartment hunting in Jordan – a culturally relevant everyday topic that students could clearly relate to from their own experiences in the US and in anticipation of a future stay abroad in Jordan. Students were very active in the class and clearly appreciated the many opportunities Dr. Khazaal offered them to engage in authentic communication in Arabic. The atmosphere in the classroom was energetic, constructive, and communicative throughout. Dr. Khazaal’s teaching encourages students to take an active part in the class. The class I observed was student-centered had a cooperative atmosphere were students, under Khazaal’s patient and encouraging guidance, had to actively acquire the material rather than to passively absorb it. Students were frequently responsible for independent fact-gathering or discussion activities, the findings of which they were then asked to present to their peers.

Dr. Khazaal’s courses overall are informed in many ways by her innovative research in the connections between Arab media, democratization, disenfranchisement, gender, migration, and minorities. In this aspect, she is deeply committed to let her students take part in her research and to design classes that invite students to ponder these problems and develop their own research questions to pursue. In fact, her 3000 and 4000 level classes seem to further contest the ostensible boundaries between “language” and



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“culture” observed by the MLA in its report and serve as a blueprint of how the integration of both can be practiced at different proficiency levels. A central part of Dr. Khazaal’s efforts at pedagogy-innovation in the Arabic program is her introduction of Project-Based-Learning practices into her courses. This empowers her students as independent thinkers in charge of their own learning/research trajectory and progress. It also enables her students to make even deeper experiences in Arabic and create authentic deliverables that not only have linguistic, but also cultural and technological relevance in the forms of podcasts, websites, and computer mediated communication. For example, her use of podcasts has fostered real-world connections of GT students with native Arabic speakers in Lebanon or Atlanta. Her course on Media and the Middle East has students engage in research of the connections between Arab media habits and those of the Atlanta Arab diaspora. Such courses, situated at the nexus of media, identity, gender, and democracy, are truly designed to foster a level of crosscultural competence that plays a crucial part in helping our students become the “good global citizens” that Georgia Tech prides itself in producing. In this regard, Dr. Khazaal’s teaching play an important role in furthering both the School of Modern Languages’ and the Institute’s strategic plans.

Apart from her many endeavors in the classroom, Dr. Khazaal has established a rich record of program building and curriculum design since she joined our faculty ranks in 2019. As an intellectual leader in Arabic Studies at Tech and as Program Director of Arabic in our School, she has driven several innovations that have changed the Arabic program profoundly and aligned it closer with the School’s curricular priorities (among them a pivot to sustainability and democracy/media-literacy-themed instruction) since she joined us. She introduced a new textbook that places emphasis on both the spoken and written varieties of Arabic and trained the Arabic faculty in the philosophy of the textbook. She has taken a leadership role in the shaping of the School’s interdisciplinary Minor in Middle Eastern and North African Studies (MENAS) and is currently in the process of proposing an Arabic Minor. She is currently designing an entirely new iteration of the Arabic Languages for Business and Technology (LBAT) summer study abroad program in Amman, Jordan. She also directs the Project GO program that allows qualified ROTC students a funded opportunity to receive a critical language education, overseas study, and important cross-cultural experiences. I am confident that her leadership and curricular vision for our Arabic program will ensure that Arabic will thrive and continue to grow at the School of Modern Languages.

In sum, as a highly accomplished scholar-teacher and innovator whose courses breathe the spirit of interdisciplinarity, critical inquiry, and inclusivity, I enthusiastically recommend Dr. Khazaal for this award.

Sincerely,

Jan Uelzmann, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of German
Associate Chair, School of Modern Languages



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6 February 2022

To whom it may concern:

Having recently completed a Bachelor's program for electrical engineering from Georgia Tech, the intense focus on the principles of STEM at the school has made it evermore clear to me the importance of a well-rounded education beyond the requisite coursework necessary for my degree. Not only is a diversity in subject matter critical in a student's education, but the development of communication skills with fellow students and an application of these skills during long-term projects are key in preparing us young adults for our first steps into the professional world, as well as fostering a perpetual passion for developing our critical thinking.

Of all the classes, clubs, and labs in which I participated, Dr. Khazaal's Arabic class has given me the most experiences necessary for my entry into industry and has most invigorated my greater pursuit of knowledge. While continuing to develop my foundation of vocabulary and grammar in Arabic, the environment that Dr. Khazaal fostered to apply these facets of language-learning to semester-long group projects, discussions on real-world events, and conversations with native speakers provided an opportunity to hone my command of Arabic and improve my methods of communication and teamwork, both within and outside of the language.

During the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters, I took 3000 and 4000 level Arabic with Dr. Khazaal, and her work ethic and dedication to her students shined through in all aspects of her classes, from the structure of the syllabus to her day-to-day lectures. In addition to striking a balance between the ever-delicate procedure of reviewing old vocabulary and teaching new language, Dr. Khazaal always showed faith in her students' abilities and competence in not only retaining this old and new information, but in applying this knowledge in semester-long projects to create a website and podcasts with relevant information for Arab-speaking students moving to Atlanta. With this goal in mind, Dr. Khazaal went above and beyond to find news articles, research papers, and interviews in Arabic in order to provide us with a window into the lives and education of Arab immigrants and refugees globally, thus contextualizing the significance of both learning the language and the significance of our project to our community. This supplemental material and the discussions she guided not only provided reference material for the project, but also reminded me of the actual individuals with whom I had endeavored to

communicate when I decided to learn Arabic. Where so many other professors would lose their students amongst the dizzying array of rules over verb conjugations, article placement, and noun declensions, Dr. Khazaal never failed to remind me that language is ultimately a tool for connecting with the hearts and minds of individual speakers. Furthermore, because of the native Arab speakers from Lebanon she introduced to us to the supplemental tutors she provided, I was given an education far more enriching than the rote memorization and grammar books I had come to expect before her classes.

This is nothing to say of the near insurmountable challenge of adapting to the pandemic; while student life has become a significantly greater struggle since 2020, I cannot begin to fathom the challenges a professor would face in adapting multiple courses to online education within a matter of weeks; nevertheless, Dr. Khazaal seamlessly transitioned to remote education and provided a fulfilling learning experience to her students.

Regardless of the medium through which she taught, each component of the syllabus -- from the guest speakers, to the research papers, to the final projects -- served a greater purpose of providing a holistic experience to my education in Arabic. Ultimately, Dr. Khazaal's supplemental research, project-driven coursework, and focus on the real-world application of language over grammar and vocab drills are mere intimations into her dedication to the field, compassion for her students, and mastery in both education and Arabic studies. For all that she has provided to me as a student, as a young professional, and as a lifelong learner, Dr. Khazaal is deserving of recognition as the wonderful professor, mentor, and friend she is.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Fan", with a stylized, flowing script.

James Fan

Electronics Engineer

Electronic Warfare FMS Branch

AFLCMC/WNY (Robins AFB, BA)

DSN 468-5806; (478) 926-5806

3 February 2022

Re: Letter of Recommendation for Dr. Natalie Khazaal

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my support and appreciation for Dr. Khazaal. I have been a student of hers for about 2 years, specifically regarding Arabic language acquisition, so I would like to offer my experiences and insights into this professor with you.

Dr. Khazaal has been very supportive of my educational endeavors. Moreover, her instruction has helped me become much more proficient and less apprehensive about "performance" (ie grading). Even though my goal is to acquire Arabic for my own personal endeavors, achieving a certain grade became paramount over learning to effectively communicate. The experience had been extremely anxiety-provoking and made me question my capabilities, so I am especially grateful to Dr. Khazaal for her innovative teaching style. She structures language instruction so that it is not a zero-sum exercise, ie individual exercises are lower stakes, so I feel empowered to take more risks on the various exercises without hurting my overall grade. The curriculum is topical and relevant, which makes retention less difficult, but it is challenging as well. Also, she is patient and allows students to produce the language at their own pace rather than rushing us. As a result, I am learning more and retaining it better.

Dr. Khazaal's teaching methods are immersive and relevant to real life situations. In previous classes, there were few opportunities to acquire or apply functional language skills, ie we were unable to verbalize basic ideas, thus rendering the classes largely useless for professional or personal pursuits. In Dr. Khazaal's course entitled "Contemporary Arab Culture" (taught in Arabic), we were exposed to spoken and written forms of the language across various mediums. Emphasis was placed on contemporary topics as they appear in media, advertising, online videos and even social media, which reinforced the learning experience. In "Advanced Arabic II" Dr. Khazaal assigned readings from Arabic language research journals. We were then asked to perform similar research and report on our findings. Conducting our own research in Arabic and reporting on it was a challenging activity which provided the opportunity to acquire important skills which can be applied in real life social and professional situations. In addition,

we were paired with native speakers from Natakallam.com, who tutored us on a one-on-one basis to further hone our language skills.

To sum up, Dr. Khazaal is a talented and engaging professor who is accessible and approachable. She has tailored the course content to meet us where we are. In terms of applied language skills, her instruction is creative, practical and helps students build important professional communication and presentation skills. I am grateful that she is my instructor. If you have any questions or would like to contact me, feel free to do so at charlierose@gatech.edu.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R.F.', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Charlie R. Farah
cc: Natalie Khazaal

To whom it may concern,

I strongly recommend Professor Khazaal to be the recipient of this award. I am a 2nd year student currently participating in my 2nd semester as one of her students, in her Arabic 2002 class.

Before taking my Arabic 2001 course with her, I was fairly hesitant about continuing with studying Arabic. I was wary about the 2000-level courses since I felt that I was behind the curve from having hardly any experience in the language and was still struggling with a lot of basic concepts in Arabic. However, Professor Khazaal's passion for the subject and enthusiasm encouraged me to continue taking her course.

Looking back to her Arabic 2001 course, Khazaal demonstrated patience and adaptability with her lectures to ensure every student in her class fully understood the material. In particular, she once stopped proceeding with the planned lecture to spend a day reviewing and teaching concepts we students were unfamiliar or still confused about from the previous course such as counting, grammar, and foods. She also took the time to add in an extra unit to teach us practical Arabic phrases and conversational starters such as telling/asking the time and for directions.

In addition, she is very creative with how she reinforces the course material. Last semester we played a variation of Jeopardy with the class being split into teams and we could only speak in Arabic for the duration of the game, we also reviewed by having mock interviews, Simon says, and even role-playing scenarios such as pretending to order at a restaurant or being at a business meeting introducing yourself. From the activities, she gauges where the class's weak points in vocabulary or grammar are and will spend time reviewing topics we struggled on.

In conclusion, Professor Khazaal has been my spark of inspiration in my Arabic studies. I intend to continue with my Arabic language studies and possibly pursue deeper into Middle Eastern studies as I proceed to complete my degree. Without a doubt, her teaching has made me more confident with Arabic and her passion has increased my interest in it even more so.

Sincerely,
Akilah Easley