Professor Larson approached me about doing an Engaged Learning Project at SMU. The project is a health-related research project aimed to help train community workers to diagnose and treat cervical cancer in Zambia. Professor Larson has taken a special interest in helping myself and several other students use the skills we learned in the classroom to make a difference in the healthcare and computer science communities, both locally, and internationally.

Professor Larson is more than just a professor. He is a mentor, who encourages and challenges students to go beyond what they study in the classroom. Professor Larson structures his classes in a way that works toward a final goal, rather than a final exam. He teaches us a variety of skills and analysis techniques, then encourages us to use this knowledge to create new, innovative designs, with the ultimate goal of creating something we could market or publish. It is a unique experience that prepares us for the real world in a way that no other class does. In his classes I don't feel like I am working toward a grade or a degree, but I am learning how I can use my skills to make a difference.

Professor Larson engages with his students on a personal level with every project we complete. He is almost always available in his office. He makes time to help us brainstorm new project ideas, learn skills that we haven't covered in the classroom, and connect us with university and local resources to help our ideas come to fruition. He makes it obvious that he has a passion for researching and creating new technologies that help make the world a better place, and he works very hard to help students recognize that passion and realize their own potential in impacting the field of technology.

If my other responses have not made it clear, then know that Professor Larson is one of the most passionate professors at SMU. He is committed to his own work, as well as the work of his students. He has been involved in several published research projects of his own, presenting at national conferences and working with a unique variety of academics and professionals. He also structures his classes in a way that encourages students to learn from his experiences. He doesn't just teach Computer Science skills, he teaches us how to take our skills beyond the classroom. He wants all of his students to learn to think outside the box, and use the skills he teaches outside the classroom.

Eric Larson is one of the greatest mentors and role models I have encountered at SMU. He has gone above and beyond inside the classroom and out to make my learning experience at SMU the best it can be. I take every class I can with him, knowing that his courses offer me opportunities I cannot get in any other class. He has pushed me and inspired me to go outside my comfort zone, tackling issues and taking on projects I wouldn't have engaged in without his influence and guidance. The work I have done for him is at the top of my resume and contains my proudest accomplishments at SMU. Eric is highly deserving of a HOPE Banquet Nomination and should be considered for recognition as the HOPE professor of the year.