



SUNY SULLIVAN

Letter of Recommendation

March 8, 2023

To the Promotion Committee:

With great pleasure, I am writing to lend my highest support to Professor Jessica Lopez-Barkl for her promotion to full Professor. I have worked closely with Jessica in multiple capacities since my arrival at SUNY Sullivan in 2015, including performing in several theater productions under her direction, and I could not be more impressed with Jessica's body of knowledge, her prodigious talent, and above all, her outstanding abilities as a teacher, theater artist, and colleague.

I have had many opportunities, both formal and informal, to observe Jessica at work, including a recent classroom observation on March 2, 2023. In her instructional classes as well as her work with students in the performing arts, Jessica demonstrates an uncanny ability to both inspire students and to hold them accountable, enabling them to challenge, stretch themselves, and grow in ways they themselves perhaps did not previously suspect they had the ability to do.

As an instructor, Jessica draws on a remarkable combination of skills. Many times, I have witnessed her ability to empathize with students while still setting high standards for behavior and classroom expectations. As an instructor, Jessica is as focused on helping students master life skills, starting with showing up on time and getting the work done, as she is on conveying difficult concepts and fostering critical thinking. Her emphasis on the whole student will clearly serve students well in all aspects of their future personal and professional lives. Jessica inspires students to grow beyond their current capacity in multiple ways.

In my recent observation of her Shakespeare class, I was as impressed by her vast body of knowledge about her subject as I was with her enthusiastic and humorous ability to challenge students as she conveyed complex content in a variety of entertaining ways. Her work leading the Theater Arts program, however, is no less outstanding. As a participant in numerous productions under her direction, from *Ragtime*, *Assassins* (the top theater experience of my life), *Marshall County Line*, and *Working* to several V-Day performances, I have had countless opportunities to observe multiple aspects of Jessica's work. She is an outstanding instructor, director, and Theater program director, as well as an artist of prodigious talent in her own right, and she is both respected and beloved by the hundreds of students, colleagues, and community members who have had the privilege of working with her.

Jessica holds herself to a similarly high standard as she holds her students. A former



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colleague of ours used to call her the hardest-working person on the campus, and from everything I have observed, I have to agree. She continually pushes not only her students, but herself and her program, beyond the usual theater “chestnuts” into challenging new territory. In her efforts to do so, in my opinion, she has elevated the tenor of discussion across the entire campus and greatly enhanced the culture at SUNY Sullivan in more ways than I can count.

A final note: unexpectedly, during the recent observation of another instructor, when students were asked to write for three minutes about a woman they admired, one student launched into a 5-minute impromptu speech about how much she admired Jessica Lopez-Barkl. The student called Jessica a “one woman army,” describing how she had created the Theater program from the ground up, by herself, including how she constantly supports campus events in the theater even when running them is not actually part of her job. The student described Jessica as a woman “full of wisdom who continues to impress me,” and concluded with “That woman is a wonder to me.”

The student’s words confirmed what I myself have already witnessed in my observations of her work, also richly evidenced by the vast number of alumni and community members who return again and again to work with Jessica: through her multifaceted work in the Theater program and across the campus, Jessica Lopez-Barkl changes lives.

I wholeheartedly and without reservation give Jessica Lopez-Barkl my highest recommendation for promotion. I hope the College will continue to support Jessica in all her professional endeavors and provide her with the resources she needs to continue her outstanding work.

Sincerely,

Daneryl Nier-Weber
Associate Professor of English
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