



Tel: 845-434-5750

Fax: 845-434-4806

SULLIVAN
COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
S • U • N • Y

March 20, 2017

Dear Promotion Committee,

I am writing in support of Jessica Lopéz-Barkl's promotion. Like a sorceress, Jessica has created a Liberal Arts Theater track from thin air, convincing students to appear for rehearsals prepared and on time; converting an ever-growing community of students into theater majors and/or enthusiasts; cobbling together sound, lighting, and other outdated and malfunctioning theater equipment to get through each production; and this year hosting judges from the Kennedy Center, who publicly recognized our college's students and theater program. And more, all within a few short years.

The sorceress analogy isn't fair. Jessica has achieved much success with hard work, not a wave of a wand.

To begin: teaching and related activities.

Jessica primarily teaches theater and speech courses, as these are her areas of expertise. Since arriving at the college, she has created and/or taught Theater History I & II, Voice and Diction I & II, Physical Theater I & II, Musical Theater I, Technical Theater Practicum (Set Design, Lighting Design, Costume Design, Sound Design, and Stage Management), Musical Theater I, Intercultural Communication, and Interpersonal Communication. She also teaches Shakespeare, Music Appreciation, and Metamorphosis. Additionally, Jessica has created an effective online Speech class when many of us thought it couldn't be done.

Jessica teaches seated and online classes; winter and summer classes; she taught an Improv class to the New Hope community; and she has taught Theater History I and Speech at Sullivan Correctional Facility. Jessica's students respect her. She is demanding, but they know she pushes them to make them succeed. She explains clearly what she needs from them and why. She explains how the information they learn will benefit them in life. And she holds Sunday tutoring sessions to help them pass their courses. When not in class, Jessica's students ("groupies") can be found at the tables right outside of the theater, or in the theater itself, helping her to move props or whatever needs to be done. She has taken students who were disenchanted with college and kept them until graduation. Jessica's high SEEQ scores illustrate the respect she has earned from her students.

In addition to teaching and directing plays, Jessica oversees and teaches work study students—more than one of whom was hired locally based on technical skills learned from working with Jessica.

Jessica also is an LMS expert. She knows more about Blackboard than anyone in the Liberal Arts division (and we have several proficient faculty). She served on the committee that chose our new LMS, Brightspace. And she makes good use of digital technology, including Blackboard, in her classes—including seated classes. She communicates with her students by texting, which means that they actually receive her messages.

Jessica, with help from Paul Reifenheiser, created the General Education 10 Speech assessment and rubric (based on one from the National Communication Association), which will be used for the first time this spring semester. The process of evaluating the students' Gen Ed 10 proficiency in Speech includes the use of two youtube videos of Jessica's Speech students. In addition to posting a variety of student speeches on youtube, she also has created many youtube "how to" videos, for teaching and for theater technology. And more.

On to work for the college, outside of but related to teaching.

Jessica has directed approximately three plays per year since arriving at the college, including musicals. Right now she and Gabe Rikard are working on *Marshall County Line*, a musical written by Gabe (including the music) and based on William Shakespeare's *Measure for Measure*. Although Gabe wrote the play, Jessica has been his advisor and editor. Apparently I am not the only person who is impressed by her creativity, as this past fall her plays *Assassins* and *Topdog/Underdog* were adjudicated by the Kennedy Center and several of the student performers and stage crew invited to compete with college students from around the United States. This experience would be the highlight of most students' educations, but especially for our students, most of whom do not come from privileged backgrounds where opportunities of this sort are common.

The college productions consist of students, faculty and staff, and members of the community. As a "community" college we often talk of the importance of bringing the community into our space and showing them what we do. Even during her first year at the college, Jessica had forged these connections, and now, several years later, they are strong. She is closely involved with local theaters and theater groups, like NACL and Shadowland. In addition, she has brought other shows to the college, such as last semester's *Los Valientes*. And she has acted for other in-house productions, such as *The Vagina Monologues*. Since Jessica's arrival and the Theater Program's reputation has grown, the number of people attracted to our productions has noticeably increased.

Jessica's job requires much administrative work. While creating courses that will transfer to four-year colleges, and putting together the paperwork for SUNY approval of our Theater Program, Jessica has been reaching out to other SUNYs to forge 2X2 programs and articulation agreements. This involves a good deal of time and research.

I am hoping by this point that you, the promotion committee, are getting an idea of how much hands-on work, research, and networking Jessica has put into the theater—and our college. In addition to all she has done to get the program up and running, this past semester Jessica was our only theater technician, as James Goodwin was reassigned to IT. So in addition to teaching and directing the plays and working with local and other theater companies and getting

paperwork together for SUNY, Jessica has been running the Met Opera broadcasts and other events scheduled for our theater. For no additional pay.

I could add more, but this letter is quite long enough.

My only concern about Jessica is that some day she will crash and burn. The amount of time and energy she has put into her job is superhuman (thus the sorceress reference). I strongly recommend Jessica Lopéz-Barkl for a promotion. I know of no one who is more deserving.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lynne Crockett". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

Dr. Lynne Crockett
Chair
Liberal Arts and Humanities