

I have been asked by Tashina Vavuris to write a letter of recommendation in support of her application for admission to the University of California, Berkeley Education Ph.D. program; I am happy to do so. I have known Tashina for six years. She was a student in my Introduction to Sociology course at San Diego State her first year as an undergraduate. Two semesters ago she was a student in my graduate seminar, Globalization and Ethics, and during her last semester she sat in on my Contemporary Social Theory class. I was also on her thesis committee.

Tashina graduated last spring as one of the top three students in her graduate cohort, a cohort which was one of the best that we have had in years. The other two of the top three students are both fully funded in Ph.D. programs at elite universities. Academically, Tashina is comparable with those two students. She is able to comprehend complex theoretical arguments; she has developed her critical thinking skills to a high level, and she is a highly competent speaker and able to express herself well in writing. Her written work in the graduate seminar was excellent.

While Tashina is comparable to our best graduates academically that which makes her an even better candidate for a Ph.D. program is her commitment to education. This commitment takes two forms. The first is a passionate desire to learn. This emerged gradually in her undergraduate years, but took substantial form during the globalization seminar. Since that time she has dramatically improved her knowledge base. She read more than any graduate student with which I have ever had significant contact, and she never stopped asking me questions about what she was reading. Before she graduated, she knew she was going to take a year off, so she asked me for a reading list. When I met her in October of this year to discuss her plans for graduate school, we talked about the list also. She had read almost everything on the list and had developed a new list.

The second way in which the commitment to education manifests itself is through her commitment to progressive education and her desire to be a teacher who embodies the values of progressive education in her teaching. She came to me frequently when she was a teaching assistant in our large Introduction to Sociology course to discuss ideas about progressive education and effective ways of implementing them in the break out sections.

The trajectory of Tashina's academic career has taken has been remarkable; it makes me incredibly happy as a teacher to see what has taken place with her in the last six years. I encouraged her to go on for a Ph.D. and I give her my highest recommendation. I believe that she would excel in the program.