March 1, 2013

I am writing a letter of recommendation in support of Alonzo Howell’s application to the California State University, College of Humanities, Arts, Behavioral and Social Sciences, Master’s program in Sociology. Alonzo was a student of mine almost five years ago in my Introduction to Social Problems course. Because of the size of the course and the limited means for evaluating a class of two hundred and fifty students, I can only comment to a small degree on Alonzo’s academic potential for being successful in a graduate program. But I can comment on what type of student he was in a broader sense because of two types of interactions we had. First, though, the evaluation process was very narrow for the course that Alonzo took from me. It consisted of three exams, multiple choice and true/false, and two extra credit assignments. Alonzo received a B in the course which had an overall grade average of 2.5. It is difficult to make a judgment about someone’s intelligence or academic ability based on scantron exams. However, I could tell more through the extra credit assignments. Each assignment involved watching a documentary and then coming to talk to me about it. During our discussions, I found Alonzo to be intelligent and articulate. He could discuss the issues raised in the documentaries and he could relate them to issues in class and in his life. Also, in these discussions, I sensed a real interest in and commitment to progressive social change.

The extra credit assignments were our first interaction. The second interaction involved our participation in a social movement at San Diego State. The SDSU administration had responded to budget cuts by eliminating course offerings, limiting sections offered, and firing faculty and staff. Students and faculty organized in protest. An *ad hoc* student group emerged that brought together faculty, individual students, and many campus student organizations. The goal of the *ad hoc* group was to remind the administration of the mission of SDSU, the primary one being to provide a high quality education. Alonzo was a central participant in organizing the group. He worked well with all of the groups and demonstrated a comprehensive knowledge of the issues. Working with him reinforced the judgment that I had made based on our previous interactions. He is intelligent beyond the measure of scantron testing, and he is a quality student in the broadest possible sense.

I recommend him for the program based on the above combinations of reasons, class performance, extra credit performance and our work together in the ad hoc group. If I can be of any further assistance, I can be reached at [psemm@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:psemm@mail.sdsu.edu) or 619-594-5906.

Sincerely,

Tom Semm

Lecturer

Dept of Sociology

San Diego State University