September 12, 2014

To: Admissions Committee

Itzel Calderon, a student in my Contemporary Sociological Theory course in the fall of 2012 in the Sociology Department at San Diego State, has asked me to write a letter of recommendation in support of her application for admission to the University of Southern California **Virtual Academic Center’s** MSW program. The two theory courses, Contemporary and Classical, in the Sociology Department, are required and are arguably the most difficult courses that students encounter in the Sociology major and minor. The reason that I mention this is that I believe that Itzel’s performance in the Contemporary Theory course can provide a valuable insight into her academic ability and potential for doing graduate work.

Itzel was the best student in her class which consisted of Sociology majors and minors and one graduate student. Several of the students went on to graduate programs. There were two papers assigned and three exams. The exams consisted of short answer and essay questions, and Itzel earned As on each of the three exams. Theory papers are more difficult for most students because they require them to think critically and think at a higher level of abstraction. Itzel wrote two of the best papers in the class. Her papers were well organized, thoughtful and reflected the ability to think critically and reason complexly. Academically, I would rank Itzel in the top 2% of students that I have taught at San Diego State (approximately 5000). I believe that she would be able to handle the academic challenges posed by any advanced degree program, and she would excel in any advanced degree program.

I know that Social Work programs look at other than academic factors, and I can only comment to a small degree on those other factors. The class was a diverse class and Itzel interacted well with all the other students. She participated fully in class discussions, asked intelligent questions, and was attentive and respectful.

I am happy that Itzel asked me to write a letter of recommendation and I highly recommend her without qualification. I believe that she would do quality work in the program and quality work as a professional. If I can be of further help, I can be reached at [psemm@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:psemm@mail.sdsu.edu) or at my office NH 204 phone 594-5906.

Paul Tom Semm

Professor, Department of Sociology

San Diego State University