To: Graduate Admissions Committee

Nicole Rangel has asked me to write a letter of recommendation in support of her application for admission to UCLA’s School of Education and Information Studies; I am delighted to do so. I have known Nicole for two years both personally and professionally. I was introduced to Nicole by Dr. Jung Min Choi who was Nicole’s mentor at Barry University. In the past two years, Nicole has been in two of my courses: Globalization and Ethics and Ethics and Education. And in the last few months, Nicole and I have worked together along with students from my Social Theory and Social Problems classes to organize students to resist the exclusionary admissions policies of the SDSU administration. During the time that I have known Nicole, she has consistently demonstrated a commitment to both learning and progressive social change.

Nicole’s academic work has always been of high quality, but that which impressed me most had to do with the Ethics and Education course. Nicole created the course with two other graduate students who came to me last semester and asked if I would undertake an independent study with them. They wanted to read outside the tradition; they wanted to create the reading list; and they wanted to meet weekly like a seminar. The reading list consisted of Lao Tzu, Martin Buber, Leslie Marmon Silko, Simone Weil, Erich Fromm, and Paulo Freire. We met every week for at least three hours. It was, for me, the best teaching experience that I have had. The students always came prepared and the discussions were lively and intelligent. Nicole stood out. Her questions and comments reflected not only that she had done the reading but that she had engaged the material, even though some of it challenged her ideas and beliefs. Nicole is the reason the course worked out as it did; she was the driving force behind the course and the student whose contribution most helped it reach the level it did.

Recently the SDSU administration has chosen to impose new admissions policies. These policies will have a significant negative impact on poor and minority students. Nicole and students in two of my courses have brought together a grass roots coalition of students and student groups to challenge the admission policies. In a meeting of the groups, Nicole challenged the Associated Students to take a position against these policies. As a result, the AS, which has been an extension of the Administration for years, has taken a public position against the policies. Subsequently, the coalition has organized a walk-out and a rally and continues to gain support from both students and faculty.

Nicole’s only significant weakness, and one that more and more students have, is not having read more widely in the Humanities. This is a weakness that she acknowledged and served as an impetus for the Ethics and Education course.

I highly recommend Nicole for the program and I believe that she would be successful in the program and that she will be a highly successful professional.. If I can be of any further assistance I can be reached at [psemm@mail.sdsu](mailto:psemm@mail.sdsu) or by phone at SDSU at 619-286-5254.

Sincerely,

P. Tom Semm