January 25, 2010

To:

I have been asked by Jamie Marliere to write a letter in support of her application for medical school; I am delighted to do so. I have taught at San Diego State for sixteen years. During that time, I have taught lower division, upper division and graduate courses. I have known Jaime for more than four years. She was selected by the faculty of the department as the Outstanding Graduating Senior two years ago. As her record shows, she was a straight A student with a double major, sociology and biology. But her record does not show that she was committed to learning as well as high grades, and committed to helping others and not just herself. Her record also does not show that after her second year, she received no financial assistance from her family and worked her way through school.

Jamie was a student of mine in three upper division courses: Classical Social Theory, Contemporary Social Theory and Wealth, Status and Power. Because the courses were upper division, they had fewer students, and therefore I was able to ask more of the students. The method of evaluation in each was very comprehensive. I believe that success in the courses, especially the theory courses, reflect the ability to think critically, the capacity to reason complexly and the skill to write well. Jamie had the highest point total in each of the three courses. She had the highest exam total and the highest score on each exam. The exams included multiple choice, true-false and short essay questions. The evaluation process for the theory courses included two papers that in general involved comparing theorists and/or interpreting a theory in relation to a practical situation or an event. Jamie’s papers were the most thoughtful and the best written. In the Wealth, Status and Power course, I gave the students the choice of several articles that they could read and get extra credit for coming to the office hour and discussing one of the articles. Jamie read all of the articles and was able to discuss them at a higher level of understanding than the other students. She attended every class and made positive contributions to class discussion in all three courses. I would say that Jamie is one of the five best students, both undergraduate and graduate, out of the more than five thousand, I have taught at San Diego State. She has without a doubt the intellectual ability to excel at the highest level of academic or professional study.

Jamie has also demonstrated in the time that I have known her a commitment to learning beyond the grade. During courses, she took advantage of office hours to discuss issues that were raised in class, and she read beyond the assigned readings. Even during the semesters when she was not in my course, she would come to office hours and continue or further our discussions. It was easy to see that she was committed to learning and that she believed that learning had a value in itself.

During the time that I have known Jamie, I have gained, I believe, an insight into the kind of person she is. I wrote several letters of recommendation for her in support of scholarship applications and we talked quite often before I wrote those letters. As I said, Jamie worked her way through college while maintaining a perfect grade point average with a double major. What I discovered was a person, who never felt bad for herself, never blamed anyone, just did it. But even this was unique because it would be easy in that situation to only think about oneself, but Jamie never did. She always talked about the end, medical school, she hoped, being about helping others. She is a unique person, intelligent, self-reliant, and compassionate.

I believe this combination of academic excellence, a commitment to learning and compassion makes Jamie an excellent candidate for medical school. And I believe that she would be successful and her professional career would reflect extremely well on the institution that she attended. I support her application without reservation. If I can be of any further assistance, I can be reached by email [psemm@mail.sdsu.edu](mailto:psemm@mail.sdsu.edu) or by phone at San Diego State 619-594-5906, or personally at 619-286-5254. .

Sincerely

Paul T. Semm, Jr.

Professor of Sociology

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