I have been asked by Christina Sanchez to write a letter of recommendation in support of her application for your doctoral program; I am delighted to do so. Christina is arguably the outstanding student of the last three graduate cohorts in the Sociology Department at San Diego State University. She has a broad intellectual background that includes both history and sociology, and she is actively engaged in the community and committed to progressive social change. I have known Christina for three years both personally and professionally. She was in a student organized independent study with me several semesters ago. Since her graduation from the program, she has continued to do an independent study with me on the history and thought of the Enlightenment. Also this semester she is sitting in on my graduate course, Globalization and Ethics. She has been active in supporting equality of education at SDSU. She worked with students from my Social Theory and Social Problems classes to organize students to resist the newly enacted exclusionary admission policies of the SDSU administration.

I have taught undergraduate courses, lower and upper division, and graduate courses at San Diego State for the last fourteen years. Christina is in the top 1% academically of students that I have taught. Her academic work has always been of high quality; she is articulate in both interpersonal interactions and in class presentations, and her writing is excellent. But that which impressed me most had to do with a student organized independent study. Christina created the course with two other graduate students who came to me three semesters ago 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. 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. Christina stood out. Her questions and comments reflected not only that she had done the reading but that she had engaged the material. Christina 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.

An illustration of Christina’s commitment to learning is the fact that she has continued to meet weekly with me since her graduation. The reading has been mainly, as I mentioned earlier, on the history and thought of the Enlightenment. We have read Christopher Hill, Eric Hobsbawm, and Isaiah Berlin among others. But she also has been attending the globalization seminar and reading Eduardo Galeano, Frantz Fanon, and Gustavo Gutierrez. The last semester of her Masters program and this post-graduate work has given her a focus for continuing study in a doctoral program. Because this focus has clearly become predominantly historical, I encouraged Christina to apply to history programs rather than sociology programs.

Christina is committed to learning and teaching, but she is also committed to progressive public education. Two semesters ago the SDSU administration chose to impose new admissions policies. These policies would have a significant negative impact for poor and minority students. Christina and students in two of my courses have brought together a grass roots coalition of students and student groups to challenge these policies. In a meeting of the groups, Christina 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 organized a walk-out and a rally, at which Christina spoke, directly challenging President Weber, who was present, and his claim that his policy decisions are based on economic necessity.

I highly recommend Christina without qualification for the program and I believe that she would be successful in the program and that she will be a good representative of the program. 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 619-594-5906.

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