



ELEMENTARY EDUCATION, LITERACY, *and* EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP DEPARTMENT

BUFFALO STATE • The State University of New York

May 27, 2020

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with real pleasure that I write this recommendation for Ms. Jennifer Gutierrez. I know Ms. Gutierrez as a former student in the Buffalo State Adult Education Master's program. She took two online courses with me: ADE 634, Workplace Literacy (taken in the Summer of 2016) and ADE 620, Application of Instructional Technology to Adult Education (taken in Spring, 2017). To say that her performance in both courses was outstanding is a bit of an understatement. It would be more accurate to state that, in 30 years as a professor of education, I have never encountered a more talented and capable student.

Ms. Gutierrez shares the characteristics of most truly excellent students. She is highly intelligent and is an extremely effective writer. She will come to your program with the conventions of academic writing already well established. She has an innate sense of research methodology. I get the distinct impression that Ms. Gutierrez will be drawn to research. She has an inquiring mind and is a highly critical thinker. When she asked me to write this letter, I thought it made total sense that the word "innovation" was in the title of program to which she is applying. Ms. Gutierrez is one of the most "out of the box" thinkers I have ever encountered. In both courses she took with me, students were given a great deal of latitude as to how they approach instructional problems. In ADE 634, Ms. Gutierrez was charged with the task of designing a workplace literacy program for an actual Chevrolet Volt factory in Syracuse. Her plan was both creative and totally professional in preparation. In ADE 620, the focus was on the design and implementation of online instruction for adult students. Again, Ms. Gutierrez found unique ways to provide engaging and effective online instruction – I don't think it would be overreaching to apply the term "expert" to her in this respect.

Even though the courses she took with me were several years ago, I did not need to struggle in order to remember her clearly. In a manner of speaking, Ms. Gutierrez has never left my courses because I still use two of her assignments as models of excellence for current students. The only problem I've had with doing so is that the quality of Ms. Gutierrez's work is so impressive that, as exemplars, it has a tendency to intimidate students less committed than herself.

Beyond the qualities of intelligence and insight, Ms. Gutierrez added a willingness to dig deep. Often, good students will determine the quality of work that is required for full credit on an assignment and this is what they provide. In Ms. Gutierrez's case, she would continue refining assignments even after she got full credit on it. (By the way, Ms. Gutierrez received full credit on every single assignment in both courses.) I remember once that she emailed me about her thoughts from an assignment from two modules previous.

I remember Ms. Gutierrez as a wonderful "citizen of the course." Both ADE 634 and ADE 620 involve a great deal of student interaction and students, as a result, worked extensively in teams. Within this context, Ms. Gutierrez was fully supportive of her classmates. Whereas most students express their support in online forums through stock phrases like "Good job!" or "I agree with you," Ms. Gutierrez's feedback to her teammates would instead provide concrete and instructionally sound suggestions, demonstrating that she had really thought about her teammates' work. The thing that amazed me about these interactions was that she could provide substantial feedback in a totally pleasant and supportive manner, without ever appearing heavy-handed or as a know-it-all. Her feedback advanced the work of her fellow students and made them feel good about it, all at the same time. In all course forums and emails, Ms. Gutierrez was always upbeat and enthusiastic. To paraphrase Larry McMurtry, she is "cheerful in all weathers." In short, she was a joy to work with.

I know that there is a tendency when writing a letter of recommendation to exaggerate slightly in order to put the student in the best possible light. Please be assured that I am not exaggerating in the slightest when I attest that Ms. Gutierrez is a remarkable individual, one whom I feel is poised to make a true impact in her chosen field. Ms. Gutierrez gets my highest possible recommendation for admission into your program, without qualification. If I can provide her with further support, please do not hesitate to contact me directly at mikedg@buffalostate.edu or 716-751-2082 (home number).

Yours truly,

Dennis G. Mike

Dennis G. Mike, Ph.D.
Associate Professor Emeritus