SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY
MAXWELL SCHOOL OF CITIZENSHIP AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS
Department of Public Administration and International Affairs

Dear Sean:

I am writing to thank you for all of the effort you put in to PPA 755: Public Administration and Democracy. Your work as a teaching assistant (TA) in the summer semester of 2013 was simply stellar. You were an incredible asset to the course, and were a key contributor to its overall success. Your work was excellent, from the moment you began to assist with the course design to the course closure. You were a superb TA who consistently demonstrated both academic and teaching abilities.

Your overall contributions to the course were very valuable. You showed great initiative in all aspects of your work, from planning and preparing for the daily sessions, to leading case discussions, to organizing for the role play, and to grading the assignments. You were instrumental in helping to select readings, plan sessions, and design activities. You were able to articulate how the course might be seen from a student's perspective and balance those perspectives with the pedagogical goals and intentions for the course. You were incredibly good natured and very willing to help me and the students with any and all issues that popped up.

On a similar note, as the "lead TA," your assistance training and working with the other three TAs was critical to the success of the course. I cannot tell you how much I appreciated the time and effort you spent with them – walking them through the pedagogy of the course, training them on course-specific tasks, and otherwise helping them to improve their teaching work. Because of these efforts, we had a solid teaching team that the students uniformly appreciated. I can say with complete honesty, this course would not have gone as well as it did without your excellent participation. Thank you for all you did!

My assessment of you was echoed by the students in their evaluations of your work. Specifically, using a 5-point scale (where 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree) students were asked to indicate their level of agreement with eight questions about your performance as a TA. The average score for each question, as well as an overall average are shown in the table below. On all questions, you received an average score above 4.0, and 8 of the 25 students that completed the evaluation form gave you a perfect score. This is very impressive. Well done!

How strongly do you agree that your TA:	
1. Was well prepared for the sessions?	4.20
2. Understood the materials?	4.76
3. Communicated the materials clearly and effectively?	4.64
4. Was effective at facilitating discussion?	4.64
5. Was effective in answering student questions?	4.60
6. Was responsive to student challenges and concerns?	4.48
7. Helped you come to your own conclusions about the topics?	4.16
8. Reinforced your understanding of the concepts and lessons from readings?	4.40
Overall Average	**4.49**

In addition to the quantitative evaluation questions, students were asked open-ended questions. Responses to these questions buttress my conclusion that you are a strong TA and a natural teacher.

In response to the first question, "*What did you like best about your TA's teaching style?*" students wrote that you were "approachable," "relatable," "down to earth," "encouraging," "knowledgeable," "helpful," and "kind and courteous." Students appreciated your strong facilitation skills and your ability to ask "productive, unique, thought-provoking questions." Specifically, students noted that you challenged them to "critically think about opinions/perceptions," "made people feel comfortable participating," were "effective at reinforcing class topics," and "did a great job mitigating tensions/conflicts between students." One wrote, "I really liked that Sean helped us understand the concepts. His laid back teaching style helped us to have rational, reasonable, and peaceful discussions, regardless of differing views." Overall, the students gave you very strong evaluations, and I have to agree with the students that wrote, "Sean was an amazing TA" and "He will be a great professor one day."

The second question asked, "*What changes would you recommend to improve your TA's teaching style?*" Students offered very few substantive suggestions. The most common suggestion was to return assignments more quickly and with more feedback. A handful of students suggested that you needed to be more direct and focus on time management.

Overall, I was very pleased with your performance during my observation of your sessions. In particular, I was impressed by your ability to hold the students' attention, and create an atmosphere that was fun, engaging, and relaxed, yet intellectually stimulating and challenging. I thought you did an excellent job preparing the students to engage in the case work and that your debriefing of the exercise was strong and enhanced the learning generated by the case.

All in all, Sean, I was (and continue to be) very impressed not just with your work as my TA, but also with your natural teaching abilities. It is abundantly clear to me that you are a well on your way to becoming an engaging and exciting classroom professor. I am so pleased to witness your growth as a teacher and scholar. I have no doubt at all that you will be successful, both within, and outside of, the classroom. It was more than a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to work with you.

In sum, thank you for your assistance with, and dedication to, the Public Administration and Democracy course. Your work on this course over the last couple of years has been stellar, and your contributions have been instrumental in making this a successful, exciting, and engaging course. The course would not be what it is today without your participation.

All the best,

Tina Nabatchi

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