



To Whom It May Concern:

Over the course of my 30 years in academia, I've been asked to write scores of letters of recommendation for colleagues and students alike. I don't recall ever composing something quite like this though, an unsolicited expression of support and confidence. But the fact that this is unusual makes a sort of sense too, because the person I'm writing about is of an unusual caliber. Grace Gilfert was my student in two courses during her time here at Shippensburg, and if her contribution to those classes was indicative of what she can do for you, she's a candidate worthy of your highest consideration.

Both those classes were centered around fiction writing, and Grace consistently demonstrated a mastery of the language. Her personal style is fluid and she has an excellent grasp of imagery. More importantly though, she showed an ability to analyze a prompt, address narrative challenges, and apply her skills to solve them. She has an excellent sense of the process of generating ideas, evaluating them, executing a concept, editing, and revision. Of particular (and rare) importance is the way she embraced feedback and criticism. It's not unusual for writers with her abilities to be a bit reluctant, but Grace was always eager to hear ways to improve. She was extremely diligent, intrinsically motivated by her own high standards.

A key portion of both classes was what we call "Workshop," which involves intense, hour-long discussions of original student writing. It's a bit of an emotional crucible. In addition to being an excellent writer, Grace proved herself an adept critic. Yes she was able to quickly perceive a piece's strengths and weaknesses, but more importantly, she was able to communicate her criticisms in a way that even the most stressed of colleagues heard her insights. She was well regarded by both groups of classmates, and their scores of her written critiques offers quantifiable evidence of this. In both classes, she received averages in the 93-96 range. She also earned an A in my *Advanced Fiction*. Believe me, these are uncommon achievements.

I'll close with a personal note. Grace possesses these abilities, which I can easily imagine being indispensable in any number of business settings. And truly, she's got a great drive and work ethic. But she's also a genuine person, thoughtful to those around her, amiable, pleasant, bright. She'll make contributions to the job that has to get done, but her coworkers will enjoy working with her. When I was selecting graduate students to join the program I used to direct in Louisiana, I came to value this "camaraderie factor" quite highly, and Grace has got it.

I know these letters are often stuffed with hyperbole. Perhaps you think me guilty of exaggeration. I'll remind you Grace didn't ask for this note, and I'll urge you to call her in for an interview and judge for yourself.

Please contact me if I can be of any further assistance,

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