

Department of English

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To Whom It May Concern:

Over the course of the last fifteen years, ten spent teaching in the MFA in Creative Writing Program at McNeese State, I have composed many letters of recommendation. Some, to be honest, were perhaps a bit token, notes written as a courtesy to graduate students who were not as promising as their colleagues. Others focused on the potential I perceived in certain individuals hoping to attain positions that involved responsibilities they had not yet held. It is rare when a candidate's abilities and personality truly align with an opening. But from all I can tell, that seems to be the case before us. Erica Womer has written to me and explained that she will be applying for a position at your school, where she hopes to put her talents to use as a teacher. From my extensive experience with her as a student, I can enthusiastically offer my sincerest endorsement.

Erica was a student of mine at Shippensburg University for two classes, English 308 (Fiction Writing) and English 428 (Advanced Fiction Workshop). Both demanded extensive writing. In each class, she excelled at every task. She was prompt, professional, etc. Her papers and the comments she made on the short stories we studied were comparable to those I read at the graduate level. Consistently, she was able to not only generate impressive insights, but she drew connections between texts, the kind of imaginative and intellectual leaps that have always served to me as the best evidence of an agile mind. Perhaps most importantly, her colleagues, the other students in the class, learned early on to listen closely to Erica's thoughts. In a strange way, though I've never had the pleasure of seeing Erica in the formal role of "teacher," I can attest that I've watched her teach many times. Reviewing the edits and comments she made on her classmate's stories, I was struck by her comprehension of grammar, her precision, and her encouraging tone.

Because of her training and temperament, I would be confident recommending Erica as a teacher of any kind, but she seems especially well suited to writing and literature studies. When I learned recently that Erica was teaching in a local school, when I pictured her standing before a class of young writers, the image warmed me. I thought of all her energy, all her genuine enthusiasm, and how it combined with her command of the subject matter. *What lucky students*, I thought. Later this semester, I plan on visiting Erica's class. I have no doubt I'll be blown away.

I feel obliged to end on what may seem some marginal personal notes. In addition to her objective qualifications for the position, Erica is, quite simply, a bright person. In our classes, she was affable, generous, and often wickedly witty. She'll make a dynamic teacher and a great colleague.

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

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Neil Connelly".

Neil Connelly
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