

May 11, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my great pleasure to write this letter describing Tanya McCoss-Yerigan's professionalism and collegial support. I have known Tanya as a professional educator for sixteen years and have worked with Tanya over these years as a colleague in the Departments of Educator Development and Leadership and Education. You can readily discern from Tanya's vitae and portfolio that she is an outstanding educator with varied and high quality learning and teaching experiences across multiple educational contexts and, in particular, as first a Co-Facilitator and then as a Facilitator in SMSU's Off-Campus Graduate Learning Communities.

Tanya's accumulated accomplishments are unsurpassed among those in SMSU's Education Department, meeting and/or exceeded all of the Five Professional Criteria established by SMSU, and approved by both the Education Department and the current SMSU Administration. In my estimation, Tanya is the consummate learner, teacher, and leader whose actions clearly reflect the highest expectations of SMSU and the Education Department.

Tanya is an outstanding team player and builds powerful and successful relationships with both faculty and students. Such relationships are crucial to the success of any organization, and Tanya's interpersonal and intrapersonal skills are outstanding. Because of these skills, Tanya is able to work collaboratively and extremely effectively with diverse people within and across organizations both at SMSU and in the wider community to bring out the best in everyone. These are the very qualities that have enabled Tanya to assume highly effective leadership roles across both educational and community contexts. Within the context of our department and our program, Tanya's leadership has served to support the growth of our department, the integration of our department into the structure of SMSU, and enabled Tanya to function as a highly effective facilitator in the learning communities for which she has been responsible. Over these past years Tanya has supported my professional growth in a variety of ways and has done so each and every time we interact professionally.

Tanya's creativity and drive to learn and improve both herself and the Off-Campus Graduate Program are second to none. Tanya is continuously striving to create new courses, programs and avenues to serve the SMSU community, the graduates in SMSU's off-campus masters program, and area educators. Tanya's drive has inspired me to do far more writing and creating for my students that I typically would, in this way her professionalism has positively impacted the graduate students in my learning communities.

Tanya's leadership skills, combined with her vast knowledge of schools as organizations and effective pedagogy has allowed her to create powerful and safe learning environments in which both colleagues and students embrace risk-taking, learning, and a level of creative development that I have had the good fortune to experience first-hand. I have worked with many faculty members in higher education over the past 24 years and have seldom experienced the transformative learning environment Tanya is able to create for her students and among her colleagues. Tanya's pedagogical and leadership knowledge enables everyone around her to grow professionally and, as a result, allows the organizations of which Tanya is a part to grow and develop.

Tanya is the best educator I've had the pleasure to work with in my tenure at SMSU, and although many in the Education Department talk about "integrity", from my 18 years of experience at SMSU that talk remains predominantly unsupported by actions. You would be hard pressed to find a professional educator with more integrity, honesty, or with such deep and abiding commitment, compassion and concern for her students and colleagues than Tanya McCoss-Yerigan.

Sincerely,

Lon Richardson, Ph.D.  
Facilitator in the Off-Campus Masters Program  
Professor in the Department of Education  
Southwest Minnesota State University