

March 1, 2004

Dear Committee Members:

This letter is written in support of Catherine J. Baum, one of the most dedicated and committed learners that I've had the privilege of working with at the University of Tampa. Perhaps an understanding of the context of the course in which I worked with Catherine will best explain my strong endorsement of this fine critical thinker.

My First Year Composition course at UT is a special topics course through which I facilitate students to examine American identity construction with the help of a variety of critical lenses. The point of the class is to work all semester on refining an idea so that the final paper can reflect authentic knowledge. An "A" student successfully completes this process, while improving on style and conventions along the way. Therefore, the "A" that Catherine received in this course doesn't accurately reflect her performance, as she completed the process of refining an idea to critical originality with every paper assigned over the course of the semester – 5 in all.

In every paper submitted, Catherine brought forth new scholarship and began the next paper with a separate "idea" for debate within American ideology. Of course, part of her ability to complete such a monumental workload can be evidenced in her high school training. Another part can be attributed to her natural intellect. But the part that I find most compelling is her work ethic. I have never seen a PhD graduate student exhibit greater commitment to personal education that Catherine does every day in class. In fact, at times I felt as if the constraints of course requirements stood in her way of developing ideas that were, in reality, far beyond the scope of undergraduate expectations.

I am certain that examining Catherine's own materials and meeting with her in person will allow you to accept her application even before you read this letter. However, working with Catherine made me grow as a teacher and as a scholar, and I wanted all of those who may be privileged enough to work with her in the future to know this.

Thank you for your time; enjoy your learning experience with Catherine. I can promise that she will bring new possibilities to your program and to her endeavors after her undergraduate education is complete.

Sincerely,

*E. Stone Shiflet*

Professor, University of Tampa