

American Indian Studies Program
School of Anthropology
School of Geography and Development
School of Natural Resources and Environment
Institute of the Environment



Harvill Building, Room 218
Tucson, AZ 85721-7006
TEL: (520) 621-2269
FAX: (520) 621-7952
EMAIL: bcolombi@email.arizona.edu

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I am writing in support of Michelle Boyer-Kelly. I have known Michelle for about one year and she has served as a graduate teaching assistant in my University of Arizona General Education course: AIS 160 *Many Nations of North America*. Throughout each semester (Fall 2015 / Spring 2016) Michelle's responsibilities has included attending the Monday and Wednesday lectures and on every Friday holding two, one-hour breakout sessions. The Friday sessions cover that week's course material and Michelle does a fine job helping and inspiring students – she is responsible for creating exam and test questions and assignments for her sections. Michelle grades the exams and written work for her sections, assesses student progress and meets with students during regular office hours. Moreover, each semester Michelle presents her own lecture to the large lecture class scheduled on the Mondays and Wednesdays and has also worked alongside her teaching cohort, many times stepping in to help others and often taking on extra work without being asked.

As a PhD student focused on training for a career in education, Michelle reaches out to her students in significant way and values using various engagement techniques. In her Friday sections, she uses learner centered teaching strategies to give students agency and helps them reach a level of critical thinking—not simply to recall but to elucidate knowledge of lasting benefit. She establishes criteria enabling students to complete both individual assignments and group work, which assists students in learning to work together in a college setting. In addition, Michelle's Friday sessions include reviewing material from weekly lectures, thus helping students defragment and ascertain the most useful lecture information, pairing the assigned readings with course material. What's more, she offers additional content that is suited to the interests of the section.

Michelle specializes on American Indian representations in film, engaging students with her incorporation of media video clips with other forms of presentation. Michelle believes that students should not just be told what to think, but that they must “see” things for themselves—in this case, video clips that she later asked students to analyze. She consistently provides students with media clips in her Friday sections, helping them to recall information and to experience different types of learning. That said, not all students are able to read text and make it clear, but by offering video clips they have a better understanding of what they are reading and understanding.

In closing, we all hope that Michelle will continue to serve many more years as an innovative and hard working student, scholar, and practitioner. She is no doubt a passionate, focused educator that is willing to go the extra mile for her students. I am certain that Michelle's work will endure to enable another generation of young people to benefit from her teaching, knowledge, and example.

In sum, I recommend Michelle most highly and without reservation.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Benedict J. Colombi", followed by a period.

Benedict J. Colombi, Ph.D.

Associate Professor, American Indian Studies Program

Associate Professor, School of Anthropology

Associate Professor, School of Geography and Development

Associate Professor, School of Natural Resources and Environment

Faculty Member, Institute of the Environment