

March 25, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter of recommendation on behalf of Rose Sniatowski. Rose was a student in my Community Ecology course during the spring of 2007. This was an upper division lecture course consisting of primarily seniors that focused on the major processes that structure community dynamics in a variety of ecosystems. The main objectives of this course were to 1) provide an overview to the main concepts and themes of community ecology, 2) introduce students to primary literature relating to issues in community ecology, 3) develop critical thinking skills with respect to the assimilation, interpretation and synthesis of scientific information, and 4) develop writing skills with respect to synthesizing and presenting ideas and scientific arguments. The class consisted of 38 students and as such I was able to get to know all of them quite well during the course of the twelve week quarter.

Rose immediately struck me as a very intelligent and highly motivated student. This impression was only reinforced as the quarter unfolded. Her academic work was consistently outstanding in quality. This involved both in class exams relating to concepts introduced in lecture as well as take home discussion questions centered around readings assigned from the primary literature. In addition, students were required to submit a research proposal on a specific question dealing with some aspect of community ecology. This proposal required students to provide a background/rationale as to why this question was important from a community ecology perspective, a clearly stated null and alternative hypothesis, a detailed description of the methodology to be employed, and two sets of projected results that would support the acceptance of the stated hypotheses. Rose's proposal to investigate the relative role of birds and bats on seed dispersal in Costa Rican rainforests was truly an exceptional piece of work and received the highest grade for the class. More importantly from the perspective of her qualification as a potential graduate student, she went on to actually implement this proposal following the completion of her degree.

Rose is undoubtedly one of the best students I have had here at UCSC over my teaching tenure which has spanned 13 years and included over 2000 students. She is clearly extremely strong academically, but more importantly she also demonstrates three other fundamental qualities necessary for a career in science: a keen ability to conduct critical thinking, motivation and maturity to follow through on her interests, and a deep and enduring passion for biological science. As such, I have no hesitation whatsoever in giving her my strongest possible endorsement.

Sincerely,

Baldo Marinovic
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