



*Department of English
Language and Literature*

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To Whom It May Concern:

During AY 2014-2015, Karra Shimabukuro held the position of Coordinator in the University of New Mexico Core Writing Program. Each year, two experienced teaching assistants are competitively selected for this position. The coordinator position involves a significant amount of mentoring and administrative activity. Only accomplished and experienced teaching assistants are selected for the position. In her role as Coordinator, Karra brought enthusiasm, energy, and diligence to all of her duties. She accomplished a great deal during her time in the position. I, as an assistant director of Core Writing, had the opportunity to work alongside Karra and to observe at close hand her effectiveness in the Coordinator role; this letter serves to document Karra's accomplishments and to support her application for an academic position.

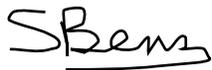
During her time as a Coordinator, Karra excelled at organizing professional development activities and communicating crucial information to teaching assistants and instructors in the UNM Core Writing Program. She sent out weekly e-mails to Core Writing instructors, providing information about due dates, available resources, and upcoming activities. Additionally, Karra put considerable effort into organizing and conducting monthly workshops for her fellow instructors. These workshops, which were quite well received, covered topics such as classroom management, use of technology in courses, peer review, and workshopping as a pedagogical tool. Besides the workshops that she delivered, Karra organized "best practices roundtables," in which tenure-line faculty members discussed their teaching practices with teaching assistants. Her enthusiasm and diligence in conducting these various activities speaks well to Karra's administrative capabilities, and I am confident that she will do well in any position that calls for administrative experience and expertise.

Karra's expertise with technology and social media has greatly benefited the Core Writing program. During her year in the Coordinator position, she researched possible replacement platforms for the program's outmoded wiki. After sharing options with other stakeholders in the program, she designed a mockup of a new site on Wikispaces and began the transfer of existing materials to the new platform. Karra also designed a site on Blogger where exemplary student work could be shared among instructors. Given these and other activities—such as demonstrating Blackboard Learn in the practicum for incoming teaching assistants—Karra has become known as an advocate for and the resident expert in pedagogical technology. I would like to emphasize her skill at guiding others through the complexities of technological applications, as this skill adds depth to her leadership abilities. Simply put, Karra is both a fine colleague and a valuable resource for any program looking to make use of instructional technology.

One of Karra's most significant accomplishments during her year as a Coordinator was the drafting of a 40+ page resource manual for core writing instructors. The manual provides an overview of the UNM program's philosophy along with information on practical matters such as course design, using Blackboard Learn, and constructing assignment sequences. The manual also provides advice on classroom strategies, grading, and assessment. This project was a significant undertaking, and in my opinion Karra will be able to develop conference presentations and publications from the materials she created for this manual. Our program is fortunate to have this resource manual to share with teaching assistants, and we will build on Karra's foundational work for years to come.

Finally, as a Coordinator in the program, Karra has played a leadership role in our annual assessment activities. We have relied upon her insight and energy as we have attempted to revise and refine our assessment procedures. In this area as in so many others, Karra's contributions will have a lasting impact on our program. Moreover, the assessment experience that she has gained here at UNM will likely prove valuable to another program looking for a talented, energetic, and dedicated faculty member.

In sum, I highly recommend Karra Shimabukuro as a teacher, an administrator, and a colleague.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S Benz". The "S" is large and stylized, and "Benz" is written in a cursive script.

Dr. Stephen Benz
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