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TO: Graduate Admissions Committee
New Mexico State University Curriculum and Instruction Doctoral Program

FROM: Dr. Rebecca L. LeDocq
Professor of Mathematics
University of Wisconsin - La Crosse

DATE: December 22nd, 2011

RE: Recommendation for ***Maggie McHugh***

Maggie McHugh, who is applying to your Curriculum and Instruction Doctoral Program, has asked me to write a recommendation regarding her teaching abilities. I am very happy to do so. I am a Professor in the Mathematics Department at the University of Wisconsin - La Crosse. I have known Maggie since she was an undergraduate student in the Mathematics Department. Most recently, beginning this past fall, I am serving as Maggie's faculty mentor in her new position as an Associate Lecturer in the Mathematics Department. In this role, I have had the privilege of observing Maggie's teaching abilities as well as discussing her teaching practices and philosophies.

In observing Maggie teach to a room of 40 remedial mathematics students, one of the first things I noticed was the obvious rapport Maggie had developed with each student. Our remedial mathematics courses serve a wide variety of students including returning adults, veterans, multicultural students, and students with learning disabilities. Maggie knew every student's name and interacted casually talks with her students as they entered. Her students were very attentive and focused throughout the class. I was impressed with the fact that Maggie had these students presenting homework problems at the board, working together in groups, and really acting as a community. As the students worked, Maggie made her way around the classroom answering questions. The second time she was asked the same question, she had the first student help the second student with the question. In this way, the students were in fact teaching their classmates how to do a problem that they had just recently figured out. What a way to build student confidence! It was obvious that the students are very comfortable, not only with Maggie, but with their classmates as well. In our follow up discussions, Maggie emphasized her belief in building horizontal relationships where she and the students are a community of learners.

Maggie's style of teaching reveals her background in educational pedagogy. At the beginning of a new topic, Maggie presents the important terms and properties and has the class help her work through an initial example. After just a few minutes of this, the students are put into an even

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more active role. They work in groups to attempt problems related to the new topic. Here again I saw the "student as co-teacher" aspect of Maggie's class. As they worked in groups, they discovered the solutions together and explained things to each other. After an appropriate amount of time, Maggie brought the group back together, often requesting volunteers to present their solutions on the board. Even those students who were initially hesitant eventually came forward. This again attests to Maggie's rapport with the class and the supportive nature of the class itself.

In our conversations, Maggie and I have discussed these informal assessment practices within the classroom, as well as her formal assessment practices of grading for conceptual understanding in addition to procedural accuracy. During one of these discussions, Maggie shared with me an assessment project that weaves together the mathematical concept of systems of linear equations with her practice of teaching for social justice. Utilizing their mathematical knowledge, Maggie's students had to analyze data that compares white men's wages with those of minority groups. Her students create models of linear equations to display their understanding of the wage earnings of various groups then explain how their findings relate to a future profession. I was really impressed with how Maggie managed to infuse so much critical mathematics into a project in a remedial mathematics course. As I'm sure is true of her students as well, I found this project extremely eye-opening.

As a doctoral candidate, I believe Maggie will excel. Through discussion and my observation, Maggie's innate passion for education clearly presents itself. Maggie seeks to grow as an educator and person. She listens to my suggestions on ways to improve in her practice and asks critical questions regarding best practices in mathematics instruction, specifically when working with remedial students whose needs vary greatly.

Overall, I believe Maggie is an inspiring instructor. In the years to come, I truly believe that many of her students will point to her class as the turning point in their mathematical education. Her teaching practice reveals an understanding of a multiple student learning strategies, and her presence and approach in the classroom motivates and instills confidence within her students. I can only hope that my children have an instructor like Maggie some day. I hope that you will give her application serious consideration.

Please feel free to contact me if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Rebecca L. LeDocq

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