



CAL POLY POMONA

## CALIFORNIA STATE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY, POMONA

Psychology and Sociology Department

March 6, 2017

To whom it may concern:

It is my pleasure to write this letter of recommendation for **Irisa Charles**. I had the pleasure of having Irisa as a Lead Peer Mentor in the department's Peer Mentors (PM) Course (Soc499) during Spring 2016. As a faculty member at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, and with previous teaching experience at Willamette University, the University of California, Santa Barbara, and Pitzer College, Irisa stands out as one of my most excellent students.

During the 2015-2016 academic year, Irisa was a peer mentor for the Department of Psychology and Sociology. In this role, Irisa was responsible for holding weekly office hours where she made herself available to all psychology and sociology majors on our campus (approximately 900 students). Beyond the weekly office hours, peer mentors also provide educational workshops for our majors. As an example, one was entitled, "De-stress Before Your Tests" and focused on stress management strategies for students prior to entering final exams. The cohort also provided workshops such as, "I'm Graduating: Now What?" and "Skills for Success." During the planning of such events, it quickly became apparent that Irisa has excellent organizational skills and is often the peer mentor who keeps the others on track and pays attention to detail so much that she makes sure everything is in place for each event. As you can imagine, the contributions of the peer mentors are a very important service to our department as it helps to lighten the advising load of faculty members and also provides our students with more relatable (and in some cases approachable) resources.

To prepare for her role as peer mentor, Irisa completed rigorous training that explored topics such as interpersonal communication skills, cultural proficiency, working in groups, and academic success. These are all skills that will serve her well in the future. Further, Irisa engaged in several observations of campus resource centers and interviews with departmental faculty members in order to better equip herself with the knowledge needed to connect students with campus resources. During Irisa's third and final quarter as a peer mentor, she was selected among the group to serve as one of two Lead Peer Mentors. During this time, I was newly appointed to serve as instructor for the course and supervisor of the program. Irisa and the other lead PM were incredible resources to me as they really filled the role as lead PMs, that is, role models and resources for the new cohort of peer mentors, *and* teaching assistants as they prepared resources for the course and conducted workshop presentations for the peer mentors-in-training. In collaboration with the other lead PM, Irisa prepared and conducted three training workshops for the course: workshop planning, fundraising, and outreach. I am so grateful for this support! It is also worth noting that Irisa went over and beyond as she was largely

responsible for the development and initial maintenance of the peer mentors website and oversaw the production of a training video for future peer mentors. Her efforts were recognized at the Department's annual Honors Luncheon in June 2016 as she was presented with the *Outstanding Service to the Department Award*. Irisa is truly a leader among leaders.

Irisa's academic achievements are demonstrated by her 3.2 grade point average, which earned her a spot on the Dean's List twice during her time at Cal Poly. In addition, she has acquired professional experience as a research assistant in a colleague's lab and is responsible for the development and maintenance of the lab's website. I have been impressed with Irisa's ability to maintain her excellent academic record while balancing considerable work and volunteer experiences. For example, she also works part-time as a web designer and administrative assistant at a residential facility for adults with disabilities. What is even more impressive is Irisa's professional and graceful disposition while balancing all of these activities! Having worked with Irisa as part of an intensive program like Peer Mentors, she is clearly someone who thinks critically about her passions, strengths, and pursues resources and opportunities in order to facilitate access to her educational and professional interests. I hope this letter has demonstrated my admiration and respect for Irisa as a student and community member. If I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at [badavila@cpp.edu](mailto:badavila@cpp.edu) or 909-979-5531.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Dávila', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Brianne A. Dávila, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor  
Psychology and Sociology Department  
Cal Poly Pomona