



October 2, 2018

Dear Search Committee Members:

I write this letter of recommendation at the request of Dr. Tracy Vargas, a colleague in the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania (KU), who is applying for a position at your university. I have known Dr. Vargas since April 2018 when she came to Kutztown University of PA for an interview for a temporary faculty position for the 2018-19 academic year. Although I have not known Tracy Vargas all that long, I have observed her teaching on two occasions—the first at her teaching demonstration during her campus interview and the second, this semester as part of her annual evaluation. In summary, Dr. Vargas is an enthusiastic, engaging, and interactive instructor in the classroom, a willing servant despite her temporary status, and a promising scholar. With that said, I **strongly** recommend the search committee give Tracy Vargas's application serious consideration.

As stated above, I have observed Dr. Vargas's teaching on two different occasions. The first time was for her teaching demonstration last spring when she was interviewing for the temporary Sociology faculty position here at KU. I was impressed with her confidence at the beginning of the class. She was giving a teaching demonstration to a small class of about 15 students. Not only did she have one teaching demonstration prepared, but she had three. She gave the students the option of selecting which topic they would like to have her teach. Dr. Vargas was actively engaged with the students and did a fine job with presenting the material and making the material personally relevant to the students. The students (and faculty present) were thoroughly impressed with Dr. Vargas's performance.

Most recently, I had the opportunity to conduct a chairperson observation of Dr. Vargas's Principles of Sociology class here at KU. The key difference between the teaching demonstration last spring and this fall is that this year Dr. Vargas is teaching very large classes with at least 90 students in each section. I observed her Principles of Sociology class, the introduction class here at KU that includes mostly non-Sociology majors taking the course for General Education purposes. Prior to the start of the 50 minute class, Dr. Vargas had a video clip of students "stepping/performing step dance." Dr. Vargas opened class by making a connection to culture (topic for the week), explaining that even though slave masters used it as a form of entertainment, fraternities now embraced stepdance as part of their culture. Dr. Vargas handled the large classroom atmosphere well, utilizing a microphone to project her voice in the large lecture hall. I would characterize her

teaching as a participatory-lecture style of which she had a powerpoint slideshow to highlight the key themes/points of discussion for her lecture, but she also was interacting with the students. Students received points for participation, which led to a number of students participating during the class discussions. Dr. Vargas also uses group in-class assignments in this class and on the day that I was observing, she was going over the students' responses for a class activity they had completed the week before. The particular class activity required students to locate and discuss a "field site" and some of the "cultural artifacts" found at that location. Examples offered by students during the class included the university library where there were signs informing patrons to be quiet and the football stadium where there was the marching band, dance team, fans, etc. Throughout the class period, the topic that was covered included the following: high and popular culture, subcultures, ideal and real culture as well as ethnocentrism and cultural relativism. In sum, I was very impressed with Dr. Vargas's teaching in the large lecture hall. She was confident in front of the students, was able to get them to participate in class, and remained enthusiastic the entire time. It is evident that Dr. Vargas has a passion for teaching and puts a lot of effort into teaching. Although I have not taught a large class in a number of years, I found myself thinking about ideas and strategies to utilize when I am teaching large classes again and a number of those ideas are ones that Dr. Vargas is currently using—in-class assignments, grading participation during class, having students do group work in class (and finishing the work outside of class if necessary) and then bringing their completed work to the next class to discuss with the entire class. Dr. Vargas's enthusiasm and passion for teaching will certainly serve her well at an institution where teaching is the main focus.

While my recommendation has focused mainly on Dr. Vargas's teaching and classroom performance, it is important to note that Dr. Vargas has quite an impressive publishing and research record, considering the fact that she is teaching a 4-2 here at Kutztown University. In addition to Dr. Vargas's article "Employees or Suspects? Surveillance and Scrutinization of Low-wage Service Workers in U.S. Dollar Stores" published in the *Journal of Labor and Society* (2017), she has one article under review and another in progress. Furthermore, she is currently working on a book manuscript prospectus. I am impressed with Dr. Vargas's ambition and dedication to her scholarly growth in the form of publications.

Dr. Vargas has also been quite active at national conferences, with three national presentations in 2018 in addition to serving as a session organizer and presider. She will be serving as a session co-organizer for the session "#MeToo in the Workplace" this summer at the 69<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Society for the Study of Social Problems. I commend Dr. Vargas for not only presenting her work at national meetings, but also serving in leadership positions by organizing sessions. Such diligence is not surprising, given that Dr. Vargas is someone who not only works hard, but welcomes opportunities to help others.

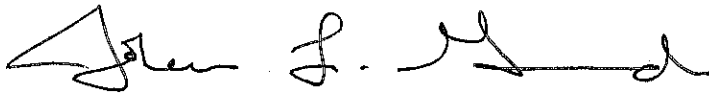
Dr. Vargas has already contributed to departmental service—something that is not mandatory for part-time temporary faculty. For example, when I asked for

volunteers for an Admissions Open House event to be held on a Saturday, Tracy was one of the first faculty members to volunteer. In addition, Tracy enthusiastically volunteered to serve as the faculty advisor for our Sociology Club at Kutztown University.

On a more personal note, Tracy is a great colleague. She always seems to be in a cheerful mood and has an optimistic way of thinking. In short, I wish that Tracy would be able to remain at KU for more than this academic year; however, given the fact that the release of tenure-track and temporary faculty lines at KU remain unknown for the next few months, I understand that she has to apply elsewhere. While I strongly believe that we will be losing a fantastic colleague, I am confident that Tracy will only strengthen the program and department that selects her for the position.

Thus, I very **strongly** recommend that you give serious consideration to Dr. Tracy Vargas as a candidate for the position. I am confident that you will be as impressed as I am with Dr. Vargas's performance in the classroom and potential as a promising scholar. Should you have any questions regarding Dr. Vargas's qualifications, please feel free to contact me at 610-683-4248 or [greenwoo@kutztown.edu](mailto:greenwoo@kutztown.edu).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joleen L. Greenwood". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Joleen L. Greenwood, Ph.D  
Associate Professor of Sociology and Chair  
Department of Anthropology and Sociology  
Old Main 465  
Kutztown University of PA  
P. O. Box 730  
Kutztown, PA 19530