



AUBURN CAMPUS

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To: Communication and Media Studies Personnel Committee

I am writing in regard to the qualifications of Samuel Avery. I have known Mr. Avery both personally and professionally for several years.

It is my observation that Mr. Avery demonstrated a strong commitment to the missions on instruction and scholarship at SUNY Cortland. Mr. Avery has been instrumental in the successful transfer of communications students from my institution, Cayuga Community College, to SUNY Cortland. Those students have reported that he is an excellent instructor. His enthusiasm for the communication and media arts are clearly evident to them as evidenced in the manner in which he teaches. He has the ability to inspire students and empower them to excel in their own work. He is a creative teacher and can pique the interest of students of varying abilities and interests.

I have observed Mr. Avery's strong commitment to scholarship and professional development through his work as a filmmaker. Mr. Avery is well known throughout the region and New York State as an exceptional filmmaker. When viewing Mr. Avery's work as a filmmaker over the past several years, his development as a filmmaker is clearly evident. He has become a master of the both the craft and profession of filmmaking. He is an exceptional director and producer. He has also mastered editing, cinematography and sound design. Perhaps most impressive, though, is that his work in film has been accepted and exhibited at over a dozen national and regional film festivals.

Perhaps the most impressive of Mr. Avery's accomplishments is the Blackbird Film Festival. He is both the founder and the director of the festival. Now in its fifth year, the festival screens over 100 films and has been rated as one of the top 100 film festivals in the United States. The festival is unique in that it emphasizes collaboration and diversity. It mandates that 50% of the films screened be made by female filmmakers. To have founded and to continue to direct the Blackbird Film Festival is a remarkable achievement. It enables students to gain film festival experience and to meet filmmakers from around the world. It brings an enormous amount of prestige to SUNY Cortland and the surrounding community.

I would also like to state that I am grateful for Mr. Avery's continuing commitment to maintaining a productive relationship with my institution, Cayuga Community College. He serves as valuable advisor to our communications curricular development efforts. He is a member of the external review team for all of Cayuga media and communication degree programs. He is instrumental in maintaining the articulation agreements between the Cortland and Cayuga communications degree programs. He mentors Cayuga students who transfer to Cortland.

I believe that Mr. Avery is an outstanding member of the SUNY Cortland faculty. His scholarship, dedication to students and instruction, creativity, and work ethic are beyond reproach. I am pleased to give him my most enthusiastic recommendation.

Sincerely,

Steven Keeler
SUNY Distinguished Service Professor
Chair, Humanities Division and [School of Media and the Arts](#)
Cayuga Community College (SUNY)
