

October 1, 2014

Paul van der Veur, Ph.D., Chair  
Department of Communication Studies  
SUNY Cortland

Dear Chair van der Veur,

The Department of Communication Studies Personnel Committee met September 22 and 24 to review the application of Prof. Samuel Avery for contract renewal. On September 30 the vote was counted. The vote was 3 to 0 to recommend for contract renewal. The Personnel Committee's decision was based on the evidence provided by the candidate in his portfolio. As required under Section 230.04 of the College Handbook, the committee cites the following evidence and other pertinent data in making its decision, as well as Sections D and E of the department's Personnel Policies and Procedures.

Prof. Avery started teaching in the Department of Communication Studies in the Fall of 2013. During his first year, we believe he demonstrated considerable ability in teaching effectiveness, creative activity, service, mastery of subject matter, and continuing professional growth.

Regarding teaching effectiveness, Prof. Avery's CTEs reflect strong student sentiment that he is an effective teacher. If one examines his CTEs, one notes that his efficacy is consistently in the 4 out of 5 range. Among laudatory student comments on his CTEs, "Knows how to connect with students in order to optimize their performance. The FaceBook integration was an innovative way to assume everyone completed tasks." Also, "A great professor who kept the class engaged and challenged our thinking with related assignments." In addition, Prof. Avery administered his own separate student evaluations, which were also positive.

Moreover, in classroom evaluations by colleagues, it was noted that "Professor Avery showed himself to be a master at class management, leadership, and technical skill. His enthusiasm is only exceeded by their [the students'] enthusiasm for him." Still another noted, "Overall, Avery's teaching style was clear, competent, thoughtful, interesting and very effective."

In the area of creativity, Prof. Avery has been involved in several ongoing documentary productions since he arrived at Cortland. These include "The Buffalo Five," and "Making Green Trees Yellow." In addition, his recently completed documentary on mental illness, "Not Without Us," has been well received with public airings, including international recognition in Switzerland where it was subtitled in German. Furthermore, the film was nominated for a 2014 Voice Award sponsored by the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

In terms of service, the department chair and the department personnel committee recommended that he refrain from excessive university-wide service while adapting to the rigors of his first year of teaching. However, they did recommend that he engage in departmental service. The

unanimous consensus is that he did so exceptionally. Last year, among other personnel issues, the committee engaged in a job search. To his credit, Prof. Avery was, as a new faculty member, willing to freely and openly express his viewpoint. Many new faculty can be hesitant in asserting their point of view during their first year. Prof. Avery professionally and politely did so, which is always to be welcomed. At all times he reflected a commendable collegiality.

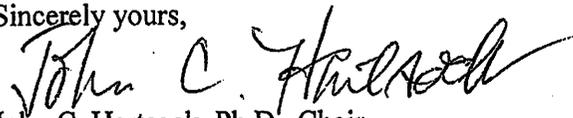
Prof. Avery has also been commendable in the area of mastery of subject matter and ongoing professional development. Last year he attended the 49<sup>th</sup> annual Society of Broadcast Engineers EXPO at Turning Stone Casino with Associate Professor Emeritus David Hollenback, as well as a master class on video editing at the Tribeca Film Festival in New York City, among other activities.

As we look to the future, the committee would make one recommendation. We would suggest that Prof. Avery clearly distinguish in his portfolio between his CTE scores and student comments that were made as part of his self-administered student evaluations. Reviewers could mistake the student comments as having derived from the CTE forms.

That said, it is clear from this committee's review that Prof. Avery deserves the opportunity to continue to contribute to the Department of Communication Studies and its majors. The vote on his contract renewal follows.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely yours,



John C. Hartsock, Ph.D., Chair  
Department of Communication Studies  
Personnel Committee

Vote for contract renewal:

very highly recommend

3 highly recommend

recommend

not recommend

cc: Samuel Avery ✓  
Caroline Kaltefleiter  
Sam Kelley

October 12, 2014



Fine Arts and Humanities Subdivision Personnel Committee  
School of Arts and Sciences  
SUNY Cortland

Dear Subdivision Personnel Committee Members,

I have reviewed the materials submitted by Samuel Avery and am pleased to recommend his reappointment for a three-year term in the Communication Studies Department. This recommendation is based on the State University of New York Board of Trustees Policies and Procedures criteria of Mastery of Subject Matter, Effectiveness in Teaching, Scholarly Ability, College Service, and Continuing Growth. This positive recommendation is consistent with that of the Department Personnel Committee. The Committee's options were to very highly recommend (0), highly recommend (3), recommend (0), and not recommend (0).

#### Mastery of Subject Matter/Continuing Growth

Mr. Avery completed his Master of Fine Arts in Media Arts Production at the State University of New York University at Buffalo in 2013. Avery's creative works earned recognition at festivals and competitions in 2007, 2012, and most recently in 2014. In addition, Avery works to improve his skills through participation in events such as the Tribeca Talks Industry Master Classes (2014) and attendance at the regional Society of Broadcast Engineers Expo (2013 and 2014).

#### Effectiveness in Teaching

Since entering the Communication Studies Department, Mr. Avery has taught COM 243 Video Production I, COM 301 Mass Media and Society, COM 322 Intermediate Writing for Media, and COM 342 Video Production II. Effective teaching in each of these courses is essential to the delivery of our Communication Studies and New Communication Media programs. Mass Media and Society is a core course in Communication Studies and fulfills a General Education 03 requirement. Intermediate Writing for Media is required of our Media Production majors and carries the Writing Intensive attribute. Video Production I & II are central both to the Media Production concentration and the major in New Communication Media.

Sam Avery has performed exceptionally well in his teaching. In their evaluations, students rank Avery highly across all measures. Observations made in three classroom visitations by faculty corroborate student opinions. By all accounts, Avery does an exceptional job establishing rapport with students, engaging his students and making content accessible to them.

#### Scholarly Ability

Samuel Avery's scholarship is creative in nature and focuses on the development of film and video projects. In recent years he has worked as producer, director, videographer, and editor. In describing his documentary/non-fiction filmmaking, Avery notes the centrality of storytelling to his work. This focus on the story is evident in many of the choices Avery makes when directing, filming,

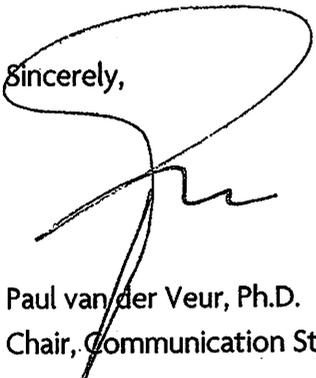
or editing. A review of his work reveals a good 'eye' for visuals and a strong sense of composition. Avery's editing demonstrates a well-developed sense of timing and motivation. An increasing level of technical skill and sophistication are also evident when viewing the body of work presented. While a few images and scenes are less than 'pristine', for the most part this can be attributed to the transient nature of the events that are documented. In evaluating this work, it should be noted that Avery's emphasis on community-based cinematography also ties in well with SUNY Cortland's commitment to community service and civic engagement and has the potential to generate significant levels of undergraduate research.

College Service

Mr. Avery was advised by me to limit his service outside the department during the initial year of his appointment in order to focus on developing his teaching skills and creative work. However, Avery was an active member of our Departmental Personnel Committee and Curriculum Committee. In addition, he served on our Search Committee.

In all areas under review, Mr. Avery has demonstrated himself to be a valuable member of this academic community.

Sincerely,



Paul van der Veur, Ph.D.  
Chair, Communication Studies

cc Samuel Avery  
John Hartsock, Department Personnel Committee Chair  
file

MEMORANDUM

To: Bruce Mattingly, Dean, Arts and Sciences

From: Karla Alwes, Chair, Arts and Sciences Sub-School Personnel Committee

Date: October 28, 2014

RE: Application for Reappointment for Samuel Avery, Assistant Professor, Communication Studies

The Arts and Sciences Sub-School Personnel Committee recommends Samuel Avery of the Department of Communication Studies for reappointment, with a vote of 2 Most Highly Recommend and 3 Highly Recommend.

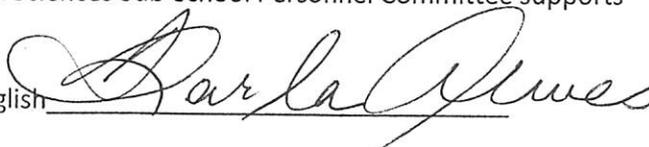
Letters from the Communication Studies Department Personnel Committee and the Communication Studies Department Chair support the quality of Professor Avery's scholarship, which is in the area of film and video production. Professor Avery has included in his dossier nine DVDs and additional documents pertaining to the production process, which represent his work since 2012; two of these are works in progress. His reputation in the field, locally, nationally, and internationally, is evidenced by the numerous screenings of his films both locally and abroad, and their favorable reception. One of his films, *Not Without Us*, a documentary about the stigmatization of the mentally ill, was recently nominated for a prestigious film award. The committee is impressed by the multifaceted nature of Professor Avery's cinematography, which is keenly in tune with provocative social issues.

Professor Avery has taught four different classes, at the intermediate and the advanced levels, since his arrival in the Fall of 2013. His teaching effectiveness is evidenced by consistently high CTE scores as well as enthusiastic endorsements of students in written comments; these are corroborated by classroom observations by his colleagues. He is perceived as an energetic, accessible instructor; his syllabi reveal a thorough degree of class preparation, which translates into fast-paced lectures and activities, yet also provides for innovative supplemental practices such as the Facebook integration that took place in his COM 301 class.

In the area of service, Professor Avery has been urged by his Chair to concentrate efforts primarily on his film and video projects, as well as cultivate his teaching abilities. While Professor Avery has not participated in any college-wide committees as of yet, the Chair and Personnel Committee note with satisfaction his willingness in serving on several committees at the department level.

Along with the Communication Studies Department, Personnel Committee, and the Chair of the Communication Studies Department, the Arts and Sciences Sub-School Personnel Committee supports Samuel Avery's reappointment enthusiastically.

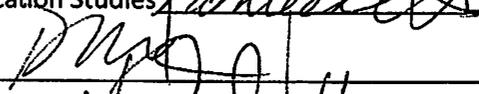
Karla Alwes, Distinguished Teaching Professor, English



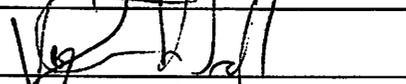
Kathleen Lawrence, Associate Professor, Communication Studies



David Neal, Professor, Performing Arts



Vaughn Randall, Associate Professor, Art and Art History



Wes Weaver, Professor, Modern Languages Department



Copy:

Samuel Avery, Communication Studies

John Hartsock, Chair, Communication Studies Dept. Personnel Comm.

Paul van der Veur, Chair, Communication Studies

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Mark Prus, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

FROM: R. Bruce Mattingly, Dean of Arts and Sciences 

DATE: November 17, 2014

RE: **Reappointment Recommendation for Samuel Avery**

I am pleased to recommend Samuel Avery for a two-year reappointment. This recommendation is consistent with those of the department personnel committee, the department chair, and the subschool personnel committee.

In his first year, Mr. Avery taught 4 different courses contributing to both the COM and NCM majors as well as the general education program. Student satisfaction is high, as measured by both the standard CTE instrument and an additional survey that he has used since 2010. Peer observations from three colleagues provide further evidence of his teaching effectiveness. Dr. Lawrence stated that his use of a Facebook course page "is one of the most advanced, sophisticated approaches I've seen of an Instructor using the newer technology accompanied by a thoughtfully prepared more traditional syllabus to provide students with materials that keep them engaged and current with the class." Dr. Hollenbeck described him as "a master at class management, leadership, and technical skill." Finally, Dr. Kelley wrote that Avery "is a valued teacher and an important addition to our program."

Mr. Avery's research and creative activity is focused on digital video production and nonfiction filmmaking. His CV lists over 100 films that he has produced in the last decade. His portfolio includes a DVD with seven of his most recently-completed works and two others in progress. His recent work is highlighted by a documentary entitled *Not Without Us* that has been shown in several states and at mental health forums in England, Germany, Switzerland and Australia. This work was nominated for an award, providing independent evidence of the high quality of his work, comparable to peer review for more traditional scholarship. In fact, two prior works were recognized with awards in 2007 and 2012. I commend him for establishing a strong body of work and look forward to his continued success in this area.

Acting on the advice of his department chair, Mr. Avery appropriately limited his service activities during his first year to departmental committees. Nevertheless, the DPC commended him for making significant contributions in service, highlighting his participation on their faculty search committee. Also noteworthy is his ongoing work (since 2010) producing promotional

videos for the SUNY Faculty Senate. I am confident that in time, he will expand his involvement to include school-wide and college-wide service.

In conclusion, Mr. Avery has established himself as a valuable, contributing member of the Communication Studies Department. He is very deserving of reappointment.

cc: ✓ Samuel Avery, Communications Studies Department  
John Hartsock, Chair, Communications Studies Department Personnel Committee  
Paul van der Veur, Chair, Communications Studies Department  
Karla Alwes, Chair, Fine Arts and Humanities Sub-School Personnel Committee

December 1, 2014

TO: Erik J. Bitterbaum, President  
 FROM: Mark J. Prus, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs *mjp*  
 RE: Samuel Avery, Assistant Professor  
 Communication Studies

I have reviewed the materials submitted on Dr. Samuel Avery and am pleased to recommend him for a two-year term renewal in the Communications Studies Department effective September 1, 2015 through August 31, 2017. This recommendation is consistent with that of the department personnel committee, the department chair, the school personnel committee and the dean.

Professor Avery's record of teaching, service and scholarship warrants reappointment. In the area of teaching, Professor Avery has established a solid record of effectiveness. His CTE ratings are very good with most numeric scores in the mid to high fours. Students commend him for his clear understanding, and preparation. Peer observation reports are laudatory and attest to his ability to engage students.

Professor Avery's performance in the area of scholarship and creative activity meets the expectations for reappointment. He has worked on over 100 film projects. Recent work has been nominated for awards, the equivalent of peer review for traditional written scholarship. Two other recent projects were also recognized with awards. I anticipate continued success in producing high quality peer evaluated creative activity in the future.

Professor Avery has established a strong record of service to the Department and the College. He served on a department search committee and has volunteered his expertise making promotional videos for the Faculty Senate.

Professor Avery has contributed to the Department and the College and is deserving of reappointment. I look forward to his continued contributions in teaching, scholarship and service.

\* \* \* \* \*

|                                | <u>Renewal</u> | <u>Non-renewal</u> | <u>Cont. Apt.</u> |
|--------------------------------|----------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| Department Personnel Committee | X              |                    |                   |
| Department Chair               | X              |                    |                   |
| School Personnel Committee     | X              |                    |                   |
| School Dean                    | X              |                    |                   |

**NOTE:** Your file in the above matter has been transferred to the President's Office for the President's review. In accordance with the UUP Agreement, Article 31.6, you have the right to examine the file during normal business hours and to respond to any item contained therein. If you wish to examine the file, please promptly call that office for an appointment.

December 12, 2014

Dr. Samuel Avery  
Communication Studies  
Van Hoesen Hall

Dear Dr. Avery:

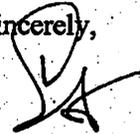
I am pleased to offer you reappointment to the faculty staff at SUNY Cortland as Assistant Professor in the Communication Studies Department effective September 1, 2015, such appointment to cease August 31, 2017. This is a term appointment subject to the laws of this State and the Policies of the Board of Trustees. Please note that Article XI, Titles D and Article XIV, Title B of these Policies are particularly applicable to this appointment.

In accordance with the Policies of the Board of Trustees of State University of New York, a term appointment does not obligate the staff member to serve beyond the termination date, nor does it obligate the College to employ a staff member beyond the termination date regardless of work or quality of performance.

If you wish to accept this offer, please sign the endorsement on the enclosed copy of this letter and return to me. This offer shall be considered withdrawn if I do not receive your acceptance on or before December 26, 2014.

*Keep up the good work!  
Congratulations.*

Sincerely,

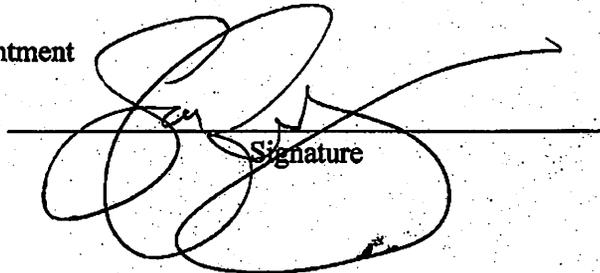


Erik J. Bitterbaum  
President

I hereby accept the foregoing offer of appointment

12/15/2014

Date



Signature

Pc: M. Prus  
B. Mattingly  
K. Alves  
P. van der Veur  
J. Hartsock  
F. Pierce  
T. Ramnacher  
S. VanLiew