



1/20/19

Dear Communication and Media Studies Personnel Committee,

It is with pleasure that I write this letter on behalf of Sam Avery. SUNY Cortland, in my opinion, is lucky to have someone of Sam's caliber on staff and bringing his expertise to the student body, college, and the community at large.

Let me start by remarking how incredible it is that Sam brought the Blackbird Film Festival to Cortland. Festivals are essential for igniting the passion of up and coming filmmaking students, helping them network with like-minded enthusiasts, and fueling their ambition. Having the Blackbird Film festival on campus gives students many opportunities they simply would not have otherwise. The film festival is also a gem for community members alike. With so many films (between 120 to 150) being screened over the festival weekend, along with workshops and round table discussions, participants leave the festival with more than just memories. They leave with contacts, ideas, information, and opportunities. Each year I not only tell my students about the film festival, I also join in on the experience myself.

In addition, this past year I have encouraged my students to submit films for screening. Submitting films to film festivals is essential for students in their evolution as filmmakers. No matter the size of the festival, having the laurels of a selection, and especially a win garners the filmmaker opportunity. Even the experience itself is valuable. Films need audiences. The Blackbird film festival gives local filmmakers the opportunity to watch the audience watch their film. This is of extreme value. Did the audience laugh when they should? Cry on cue? React as expected? Feedback is a gift. Analysis, notes for the next movie. A live audience is gold for the filmmaker.

Therefore, it makes sense that Sam would be so interested in providing such an outlet for his students, as he is a filmmaker himself. His films are beautiful to watch, often funny. Sam's pieces can be topical, but what I find most exciting and inspiring about Sam's film work is his ability to connect to his audience. By allowing the audience to identify with his characters, and or his subject matter, Sam draws us into the world he's creating. We laugh when they do. We root for them when they're struggling, and we feel their pain, as we did when watching Dominic Ficarra portray the "Dirty Old Man" in Sam's 2018, "Best Comedy" award winning short film of the same name.

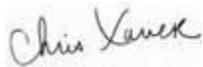
Sam's pride in his film's accolades is matched by his pride in his student's successes. Whether the students are working on projects big or small, their successes, rightly, give Sam a sense of pride and accomplishment. Because of internships Sam helped secure between SUNY Cortland and ABC/Disney at Silvercup Studios in Long Island City, two of his graduates (Gerard McNally and Kate Huey) are now working for ABC and HBO respectively. Before getting hired,

the students cut their teeth interning on ABC's prime-time television drama "Quantico", an opportunity afforded to them by Sam. Of course, those are just two scholars Sam's proud of: Nolar Harpp, class of 2018, employed now as a live stream operator at ABC news in New York city. And a little closer to campus, Justine Marschner is a producer at CNY Central in Syracuse, Alyssa Marley is a production assistant at NEW CHANNEL 9, and in Elmira, Owen Parseghian is working in creative services at WENY TV News.

I believe Sam's students are so successful because they have been inspired by Mr. Avery. Professors, like Sam, who are authentic, and brimming with genuine enthusiasm are able to spark the same in their students. By modeling professionalism, creativity, and scholarly activity, Professor Avery is fostering in his students a desire to learn and is helping them reach their full potential. It is clear while watching his students at the Blackbird film festival that they are eager to please, excited about learning and more than willing to participate. Sam sets an example and encourages those in his circle to work to their potential too. He clearly brings out the best in his team.

Cortland, in my opinion, is lucky to have someone of Professor Avery's talent, energy, drive, academic aptitude, and accolades. If anyone would like to talk to me about Sam or my thoughts on his tenure/promotion appointment, please feel free to contact me at: cmx@tc3.edu

Sincerely,



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