

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Twin Cities Campus

School of Social Work

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September 13, 1994

To Whom It May Concern

Re: Allister H. Butler

Dear Colleagues:

I gladly recommend Mr. Allister Butler to you as a social worker and university-level teacher. You will have access to his academic credentials and his work experience record, and I will not elaborate these, except to say that he is well prepared for a variety of social work positions, and that he draws upon these qualifications very effectively in his teaching. His experiences with social work practice here in Minnesota were positive ones, in which he received high marks, enlarged his stock of cross-cultural experiences, and sharpened his skills as a social work practitioner. One further comment: as his academic record makes clear, he has a quick mind, and quick wit, and uses them well as a teacher.

I should add that I formerly taught at the School of Social Work, University of Iowa, where Mr. Butler earned his M.S.W. degree. I left there nearly a decade before Mr. Butler arrived, but I have heard from faculty members there of their high regard for Mr. Butler, and the facility with which he adapted to American culture, and operated effectively within it.

He recently was a lecturer in my class, SW 3202, Community and Social Policy, a class that he taught previously, to lecture about grassroots activism in South Africa. His presentation was superb. He was very well prepared, with didactic content, with an audio tape of Black South African music and a short video produced by the South African government, which he used to elicit comments from students. His point of view was a balanced one, in which he presented the evolution of his own views, describing his own social and political awakening. He evoked in students a thoughtful, reasoned approach rather than a purely emotional appeal; an approach which was far more effective than a polemic. The unfolding of his own evolution was perhaps the most effective means of presentation, and it was done in a manner both intellectual and effective. His openness and the skill with which he weaved class discussion into his presentation was particularly effective. I have seldom seen as effective a lecture/presentation. I must add that he was not a stranger to some of the students in my class; he was their instructor in a previous class, and their respect and affection for him was evident.

His teaching skills, overall, are impressive. He engages students both in lecture and discussion, interspersing discussion, audio-visual, and didactic components. His rapport

with students comes in part from his personality, in part from skillful use of materials, from his pacing of the presentation of materials, and in the concise manner of his lecturing. These observations agree with the comments that I have heard from students about his teaching for the past year.

I also know Mr. Butler as a former student in my doctoral-level policy class. He is iconoclastic, in the sense that he does not accept ideas or values as self-evident, and probes for the philosophic, scientific, and value premises that underlie them. He was stimulating both to me as an instructor and to other students. He has a high level of energy and enjoys the give-and-take of discussion with an enthusiasm that is contagious to his fellow students and to me as well. I have enjoyed him both as a student and personally, not only for his academic work, but for his "citizenship" and affirmative participation in university and School projects and activities.

I should note the warm regard in which Mr. Butler is held by his fellow students, some of whom nominated him for the Excellence in Teaching Award this year in our college. While he did not receive it, the number of supporting letter from students and from faculty (myself included) was impressive. He held Teaching Assistant and Instructor positions while at the University of Minnesota and, to my knowledge, performed these duties very well; I have already commented on his teaching abilities.

I regret that Mr. Butler chose not to continue his studies at the University of Minnesota, but I am confident that he will complete a doctoral course of study elsewhere. Further, I am confident that he will fully demonstrate the characteristics of a fine teacher and constructive contributor to social work education that he has shown at both the University of Iowa and the University of Minnesota.

If I maybe of further service on Mr. Butler's behalf, please advise me. I apologize to Mr. Butler that I have not sent this letter earlier, as promised; I hope this has not inconvenienced his plans. I wish him the very best and continue to regard him as both a professional colleague and a valued acquaintance. I look forward to seeing his progress as a teacher and social work professional, and his contribution to his nation.

Sincerely,



Irl Carter, Ph. D.
Associate Professor
School of Social Work
University of Minnesota

cc: Allister Butler