



Department of English

May 30, 2019

Dear Applicant Reviewers,

I'm writing in support of Amanda Gerard's application for the Bracken Business Communication Center's Editor II position. As Amanda's professor in four writing courses and faculty sponsor on her Spring 2019 internship with JD Publishing (Big Sky, MT), I have been consistently impressed with her outstanding reading ability, writing acumen, and editorial facility and attention to detail. Of the scores of writing students I've worked with over the past decade, Amanda is among the eight or ten I would choose first in any professional editorial enterprise.

I first worked with Amanda last summer in my online Magazine Editing and Production course at MSU (WRIT 374), where she was a standout student. Not only was her understanding of a wide range of principles of editing (from copy-editing to managing-editing, content and design development, and business planning) high-end, but her work in peer reviewing for a national scholarly journal of rhetoric and writing studies and her design work in collaboratively developing a magazine concept and prototype was superb throughout the class. Amanda easily became one of my go-to students, and so I was delighted to meet her in several in-person classes in the ensuing academic year.

In WRIT 371 Digital Rhetorics and Multimodal Composing, Amanda put her high critical reading skills, document design prowess, and curiosity for online publishing in many forms to work on course projects ranging from short-form videos to websites, blogs, and infographics. In WRIT 205 Introduction to Writing Studies, she focused on connecting the principles and theories studied across classes in the Writing major to her own lived experience and practical concerns of developing sound writing for specific needs and producing publications.

When Amanda asked me to serve as faculty sponsor for her professional semester-length internship with Big Sky publisher JD Publishing, which produces *Big Sky Journal* and *Western RT & Architecture* magazine, I had no question whatever that she was suitably prepared and would do well by the publishing house (and represent MSU well in the process!). I monitored Amanda's work throughout the semester as she jumped into the intensely collaborative environment of writing and consulting on others' writing as a proofreader, copyeditor, researcher and reporter, writer, blogger, and project editor. Her work supervisor, the publisher's Editor in Chief, reported to me that Amanda demonstrated flexibility, timeliness and rock solidness on meeting deadlines, curiosity and eagerness to learn, and a good range of overall abilities related to writing and editing. These praises correlated well with what I was seeing simultaneously from Amanda in our Capstone course in Spring 2019. There, she took on a major research project, collaboratively authored and edited a book review, and integrated knowledge and practice from courses throughout her major in ways that made Amanda a model of the kind of graduate we like to see, prepared for a wide variety of authorial and editorial work and a range of professional responsibilities.

As I review the job posting for the Editor II position, I see that Amanda's demonstrated abilities fall perfectly in line with many of the position's duties and responsibilities. You

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would find her to be superb at the creation of instructional videos, handouts, social media, and marketing materials and an avid classroom presenter. Her abilities as a critical reviewer of documents is an area of even greater strength. And you'll be impressed with her organizational abilities and her friendly interaction with students and staff. Amanda is one of the best students I've seen for keeping the trains running on time yet doing so in a personable and approachable way as she collaborates with others. While I've not seen Amanda develop instructional materials or work in a student environment such as a learning or writing center, my observations of her workshopping with peers in several writing courses makes me confident that she would be superb in this role: both good at recognizing needed development, and sensitive and supportive in conveying that need to developing writers and speakers.

I regret not being able to compose a more concise letter, but I believe Amanda Gerard is an impressive enough candidate to have merited this second page. Should you take the opportunity to interview Amanda, I believe you'll see what I'm referring to. I am, of course, happy to be contacted should you have questions or seek more information, at doug.downs@montana.edu or 406-451-2842 (mobile). In the meantime, thank you for considering this recommendation.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doug Downs".

Dr. Doug Downs
Editor, *Young Scholars in Writing*
Associate Professor, Rhetoric & Composition, Dept. of English