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SANTA CRUZ



SANTA BARBARA •

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY  
6265 BUNCHE HALL  
BOX 951473  
LOS ANGELES, CA 90095-1473

PHONE: (310) 825-4601  
FAX: (310) 206-9630

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To Whom It May Concern:

Mr. Sameer Shah has asked that I write in support of his application for a teaching position and I do so most gladly. Mr. Shah and I met a few years ago at MIT when he attended a workshop on physics pedagogy in which I was participating; we were introduced by his undergraduate advisers [whom I know well]. Mr. Shah and I spoke then about our UCLA graduate program and I was delighted, along with my colleagues in history of science, when he made the decision to attend UCLA because we knew he had several other attractive choices. Eventually, he became a reader in one undergraduate course of mine and a teaching assistant in another; he also enrolled in a graduate seminar I was teaching. I have read several of his papers written for other classes. During summer 2006 we worked together on a large collaborative research project in Japan. It is from these perspectives that I write my letter of recommendation for Mr. Shah.

Mr. Shah worked with me as a reader in one of my courses for juniors and seniors; later he worked with me as a teaching assistant in my large course for first and second year undergraduates. Mr. Shah was more like a co-teacher in both courses. He made cogent and insightful recommendations about the content and format of the courses before they began. During the courses we discussed our teaching weekly and he made very useful suggestions about how to encourage the students progress. He always had excellent rapport with the students; it was clear to me that he was a genuine advisor to them. Because of the way I teach my classes, I strongly encourage the teaching assistants to teach their sections with an independent voice, showing their students how to engage in debates about the issues of the courses. Mr. Shah thrived in this environment and it became clear that he is a gifted teacher.

We also discussed pedagogy frequently. Mr. Shah was quite interested in my various kinds of teaching experience [Before returning to graduate school I had worked as a teacher in many venues for about ten years: a Harlem Upward Bound Program, a computer assisted mathematics instruction project for primary grades [directed by Patrick Suppes], a program for emotionally disturbed children, a private girls school, and a large public school district with a wide socio-economic range; I also developed programs for physics teachers bringing their students to a national research laboratory. As a graduate student, faculty member, and visiting faculty member I also have worked with very different kinds of undergraduate students at UC Santa Cruz, UC San Diego, UCLA, Rice University, Stanford University, MIT, and Mt. Holyoke. For example, at UCLA about one third of the students in my classes are from immigrant families.] I rarely have met any graduate student more interested in teaching than Mr. Shah. Perhaps you are aware that most graduate students and university faculty want to do research and regard teaching merely as a job requirement. From the beginning I realized that Mr. Shah did not fit that mold.

For the seminar Mr. Shah took with me he was always very well prepared and actively participated in the class. He proposed new approaches to the subjects under discussion; his comments were articulate and apt. He also was willing to learn new approaches to issues on which he already had established views. His written work was excellent. I found him to be a superb student. There were students in the seminar from other fields and departments; Mr. Shah was able to take full advantage of the opportunities this interdisciplinary seminar presented. A student in Indian history, an anthropology student from Sweden, and Mr. Shah engaged in very lively debates throughout the quarter and I know

the three continue even now to exchange ideas. The three of them made the class a great pleasure for me.

When they were at UCLA participating in a workshop I hosted in July 2004 I introduced Mr. Shah and several other UCLA graduate students to some colleagues from Sogo Kenkyu Daigakuin Daigaku [Sokendai], the Graduate University for Advanced Study, in Hayama, Japan. They were impressed by him. In summer 2005 I began a 15 month stay at Sokendai to work on a research project funded by the Japanese government. I also received support for Mr. Shah to assist me during the summer 2005 as I began the research project. My colleagues at Sokendai were very pleased with the work done by Mr. Shah during the summer, as well as the way that he combined a cheerful and open manner with thoughtfulness and politeness. He stayed in the Sokendai dorm and became friendly with many of the young staff members, graduate students, and postdoctoral researchers at Sokendai; that, in turn, helped create a very good reception for our research project at the immediate, everyday level. Eighteen months later many of my colleagues there continue to ask about Mr. Shah.

This past year Mr. Shah has worked with a group of graduate students from several fields to host MEPHISTOS, a national conference of graduate students in the interdisciplinary study of science, technology, and society, to be held in April 2007. The planning group has met in a room next to my office and I have often heard them working together. They have formed a successful collaboration and I am aware that Mr. Shah has been a pivotal figure in their success.

In his studies Mr. Shah began to conduct research on the formation of physics departments and their curricula in US universities at the end of the 19th century. At that time the US was at the margins of the various international scientific communities. To pursue research in the history of science Mr. Shah had received one of the most important national fellowships in our field; it provides full support for three years. My colleagues at MIT and UCLA and I have fully expected Mr. Shah to make important and original contributions throughout his research career.

Mr. Shah does first rate, original work and he is a determined, committed scholar. He also is a fine colleague. From working with Mr. Shah in the various settings described above I would rank him among the top five graduate students with whom I have ever worked; all of those former students either have tenure-track faculty positions in US universities or have already received tenure.

Throughout his time at UCLA we have continued to discuss his deep and ongoing interests in contemporary pedagogy in mathematics and the sciences. I am not surprised that he has chosen to pursue a career in secondary teaching. To be honest, I am sad he will not be in my fields, but I know he will become an excellent teacher. For all these reasons I have mentioned in this letter I recommend Mr. Shah to you most highly and without any reservation whatsoever. You will be very glad to have worked with him.

Sincerely,



Sharon Traweek  
Associate Professor, History and Women's Studies  
History Department, UCLA  
Los Angeles, California, USA 90095-1473  
email: [traweek@history.ucla.edu](mailto:traweek@history.ucla.edu)  
<http://www.history.ucla.edu/traweek>