

Personnel Committee
Department of Politics
SUNY Potsdam
Potsdam, New York

Dear Members of the Personnel Committee of the Department of Politics:

It is my pleasure to recommend my former advisor and professor from 2016 to 2019, Professor Popovic, for a tenured position in the Political Science Department at SUNY Potsdam.

When I came to SUNY Potsdam, I was a third-year transfer student. Professor Popovic was quick to set up a meeting to get to know me. With a lofty goal of wanting to get my PhD, he was realistic in what it was going to take for me to get there, but nonetheless encouraged me to make the effort. I immediately felt welcomed from our conversation and left having a clearer vision of what the path ahead of me looked like. I knew that I already had a faculty member who would lead me through this path and am grateful I did. Without the help of Professor Popovic, I would not be where I am today as a first-year political science PhD candidate at Indiana University.

Professor Popovic's teaching prepared me for graduate school in many ways, one of which was his ability to get us engaged with the material. In his European Union class, for example, he would have each of us pick a chapter to lead in class discussion. This forced me to go beyond reading comprehension and to explain key concepts effectively and concisely. While a demanding task, I have had identical assignments in graduate school and feel more confident and prepared because of Professor Popovic.

Additionally, he helped me gain valuable experiences outside the classroom, giving me a distinguishing graduate school application. One of these experiences included being a participant of Soliya Connect and later a facilitator of the Soliya 1YC program. As a facilitator, I was exposed to and was able to practice different methods to support and engage students of diverse backgrounds in sensitive discussion topics. This is an experience I still carry with me today as a teaching assistant who helps first- and second-year students discuss and comprehend sensitive political issues and concepts.

Professor Popovic has also worked to establish connections, such as with SUNY New Paltz and the director of their Global Engagement Program. On his advice and with his letter of recommendation, I applied to this program. This, I learned, went a long way in getting me accepted. After participating in the program, I gained some insight into its recruitment process as someone who was temporarily hired to set up information sessions at various SUNY campuses. The director of the program made it known that SUNY Potsdam was not a concern because she trusted Professor Popovic to recruit and send deserving applicants. This demonstrates the reputation Professor Popovic has established for himself and the doors he can open for students.

A final valuable off-campus experience I had thanks to Professor Popovic was his course in Croatia. The planning for a three-week, four-credit course abroad alone demonstrates his level of commitment to his students, his attention to detail, and his indispensable ability to establish key connections. Yet, he went beyond that and did all he could to make it affordable, including establishing a scholarship for the trip. Fortunately, I earned this scholarship, allowing me to participate and go abroad for the first time.

While he kept the course exciting and interactive with tours and talks from people that had first-hand accounts of some of the events from the Yugoslavia War, I was also challenged academically in a way that I had not yet been before. Nightly readings of multiple chapters of dense, academic work as well as a response paper made me a more adept reader and writer. This experience has proven invaluable to me as a graduate student now that I am reading hundreds of pages a week and turning in weekly response papers.

My experience with Professor Popovic has extended beyond my time at SUNY Potsdam as well. In my last year of my undergraduate career, I applied to graduate school and Professor Popovic was undeniably helpful then, providing guidance, a letter of recommendation, and edits for my personal statement. However, what really demonstrates Professor Popovic's level of commitment to his students is that after I did not get in and decided to reapply two years later, he was just as helpful then with the application process. I had not been his student for two years, he had current students needing his attention, was busy planning courses, grading, continuing to work on establishing the 1YC program with Soliya, and yet, without hesitation, he agreed to guide me again through the graduate school application process. I can confidently say that I would not currently be a PhD candidate without the unwavering mentorship provided by Professor Popovic.

These are just the examples from my experience with Professor Popovic that demonstrate his propensity to go beyond his duties as a faculty member. In fact, the one criticism I can give is that at times he took on too many commitments at once. This was evident from the graded assignments that would be turned back later than expected. However, when this happened, Professor Popovic pushed back deadlines of the other assignments so that we could consider his feedback first. This is to say, his one fault is wanting to do too much, but he nevertheless holds himself accountable if his own determination gets in his way.

I owe much of my success at SUNY Potsdam and my acceptance into a wonderful PhD program to the mentorship of Professor Popovic. He has repeatedly proven his commitment to his students, to the department, and to SUNY Potsdam and is more than deserving of a tenured position.

Sincerely,

Scott Boyce