

February 25, 2025

Letter of Nomination & Support for Maria Loya-Perez

Dear Dr. Joy Castro and Colleagues:

I am so very pleased to write this letter for Maria Loya-Perez, a promising first-year MA student in our English Department this year who is deeply interested in Chicana/Latina Literature and has been pursuing coursework and the development of a thesis in this area. As graduate chair of our department, I whole-heartedly and enthusiastically support Maria's nomination for the Rafael Grajeda Graduate Student Support Fund. Maria is an excellent graduate student—she has worked this year as an RA for the Nebraska Writing Project and has proven to be an outstanding Research Assistant to Dr. Rachael Shah and this program.

Because I was on leave last semester, I have not had the privilege of teaching Maria in a graduate seminar just yet, but I do want to share some comments from her professors so far this year (with their permission, of course!). In the fall of 2024, she took ENGL 871 with Dr. Marco Abel who writes, "I know Maria as a serious student who is dedicated to studying issues related to ethnicity and race since she was a member of a small team of undergraduate students who worked with me on a project called 'Film and Race/Ethnicity in Nebraska,' which at the time was part of a larger "Nebraska 1862" project spearheaded by Professor Kwame Dawes. As part of this project, the student team researched the history of representations of racially minoritized people in films set in Nebraska. The team's work was so impressive that I encouraged them to submit their findings at the Southwestern American Popular Culture Conferences, which subsequently accepted their proposals and partly funded their trip to Albuquerque, NM. Based on my experience of Maria as an UG student, I recommended her to our MA program. Since joining our program, I've had her as a student in ENGL 871: Introduction to Theory. Maria's presence in class and contributions to our discussion board confirmed my sense of her commitment to doing serious academic work and her keen interest in exploring challenging ideas (in this case in form of difficult theoretical texts). Given her personal background and proven commitment to her studies, I believe she would make for a great recipient of this scholarship."

Additionally, Dr. Shari Stenberg referred to Maria as "a true asset to my graduate seminar" and "highly engaged, offering thoughtful contributions that move our conversation in important directions." Finally, Dr. Kwame Dawes said of her work in his poetry course that, "Her poetry was always daring, innovative and distinctive. And as a student she was thoughtful, professional and extremely supportive of her fellow students. She deserves all the support we can get for her."

I know it would be a personal honor for Maria to receive this support. Maria's father and his brothers came to the US through very difficult circumstances from Chihuahua, Mexico. Maria has talked quite passionately and eloquently about her father's path to the United States and eventually to college. She has very interesting, intelligent, and deeply meaningful things to contribute to analysis of what she calls "literature of the American Dream." She is working on assembling her committee now, but I am quite confident she will produce a thesis that will think critically (and what an urgent moment to do so) about the literature and rhetoric of immigration, assimilation, and cultural difference.

Finally, I would also like to comment on the kind person you will find in Maria. A true collaborator, a gifted listener, Maria always acts out of ethical commitment, generosity of spirit, and genuine curiosity. We have been so very lucky to have her learning here at UNL in both her undergraduate and graduate studies. Along with my colleagues quoted here and the Graduate Committee of our department, we are delighted to nominate her for the Rafael Grajeda Graduate Student Support Fund.

Sincerely,



Stacey Waite
Susan J. Rosowski Associate Professor of English
Graduate Chair