



## University of San Diego

Department of English

February 9, 2004

To Whom It May Concern:

On Thursday, February 5<sup>th</sup>, I had the distinct pleasure of observing Colleen Kelly teach her undergraduate Acting class. Colleen is clearly a talented and dedicated instructor, capable of imbuing her students with enthusiasm for the process of performance and the fundamental skills necessary to put that process into practice.

Colleen employed a number of teaching strategies designed to create a comfortable and secure environment in which undergraduates might begin to explore the methods of acting. As the students were settling in, she pointed out that two of them were dressed formally (in preparation for travel with their athletic team); this gave occasion to discuss the notion of costumes and costuming, as well as the impact that outward appearance has on one's sense of self. This was clearly an instance of spontaneous reflection, yet it tied the lives of students nicely into the lessons that they are learning in the classroom and demonstrated the acuity and agility of a superior teacher.

Before beginning the lesson proper, Colleen asked the students to reflect on their last session; a sense of continuity is a priority in her classroom. This is reinforced by the journal writing that Colleen assigns the students. Each step that she takes in the classroom is thought out, advancing towards the immediate goal of the lesson and the larger aims of the course. Moving from the memories of improvised performances played out in the last session, Colleen asked the students to form a circle in the center of the room. When called upon, each student enacted a vignette from the earlier stories. The students were at ease and eager to participate, and Colleen gave constant feedback and support. The energy was palpable and contagious. Following this exercise, Colleen had the students reflect on the practice of story-telling and enactment.

The class continued with a series of exercises designed to loosen up the class physically, mentally and emotionally, followed by stories told by students, drawn from childhood memories, which provided further material for the class to explore the process of performance.

Colleen is a fine teacher, obviously admired by her students, who, even after a few weeks time, put themselves in her hands with confidence and commitment. The University of San Diego has in Colleen a consummate professional, a skilled instructor, and a person who brings to our community a combination of experience and aptitude that is inimitable.

Sincerely,

Peter Kanelos, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of English