

**Department of Special Education & Disability Policy**

October 26, 2015

Dear Dr. Yesbeck and Search Committee:

I am writing this letter of reference in support of Dr. Amber Peacock's application for the tenure-track position in Education from your college. As an Associate Professor in Special Education and Disability Policy at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and director of the Early Childhood Special Education program at VCU, I had the pleasure of working with Dr. Peacock on her dissertation committee as her methodologist. During the process of her dissertation research, I had the opportunity to work one-on-one with Amber on her research design, conceptual framework, as well as formal and informal discussions about her research agenda and career goals, I have come to know her both professionally and personally and find her to be an exemplary doctoral student and a colleague. In August 2015 Amber successfully defended her dissertation with excellent oral and written presentations of her study. Amber is well-suited for the tenure track assistant professor position in education from your college. I believe Amber will make an outstanding contribution to Randolph-Macon College.

Amber is a very passionate and dedicated scholar with strong research and writing skills. Her research involves teacher education, especially the quality of field-based experience on pre-service teacher candidates' development of knowledge, skills, and dispositions, which were reflected through her dissertation study, entitled *Exploring stakeholders' perceptions of the evaluation of early fieldwork experiences in an undergraduate teacher preparation program*. As an educational scholar, Amber has conducted comprehensive literature reviews that are critical to the field of teacher education and meaningful to instructional practices in classrooms. Based on her expertise in teacher preparation and the findings from her review of the literature, she conducted her dissertation research by exploring the process and impact of the early fieldwork experiences on pre-service teacher candidates' professional growth using qualitative meta-evaluation design. Her dissertation was meaningful in both research and practice because of the very limited empirical research on examining the content and process of early fieldwork experiences of pre-service teacher candidates. Her research will contribute to the field of special education and general education teacher preparation with insightful information for teacher educators, teachers, and educational leaders.

Amber is strong in content knowledge and pedagogical knowledge at various levels. She has over three years of direct service experience teaching students with special needs across educational settings. She also has several years of instructional and administrative leadership experience as a lead teacher and specialist in providing staff training and supervision as well as

coordination of development and implementation of instructional programs for students with special needs. At the level of higher education, she has developed and taught a wide range of undergraduate courses including theories, contents, methods, and field-based instruction and mentoring. Amber is also a great team worker with excellent organizational skills and collaborative skills. Through planning, delivery, and interaction with students and other instructors, she demonstrated strong competency and professionalism as a higher education instructor and a teacher educator.

Beyond her professionalism and competency, Amber is highly respected and well liked by her peers and colleagues because of her many qualities that I believe are essential constituents for an educational scholar. She is open-minded, caring, and always willing to help others. She respects her peers, students, and other professionals. She serves the community and the society as a responsible citizen. I believe her competency and her professionalism, her passion and commitment, along with all the good qualities as a human being, will make her a successful and respectable faculty member in your program.

I have no doubt that Amber will make a valuable contribution to your college and to the field of special education teacher education. If any additional information is needed from me, I can be reached via email: yxu2@vcu.edu or phone: 804-828-5298.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yaoying Xu', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Yaoying Xu, Ph.D.
Associate Professor