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Prof. Charles B. Fledderman
Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Community Engagement
The University of New Mexico

Dear Dean Fledderman,

I am writing to lend my support for the posthumous degree of Bachelor of Science in Computer Science to Michael Sanchez. He was well a well respected student in our department, both by faculty and his peers. He was always willing to help another student out with their coding project or homework. I recommended him to the McNair program, and I've included an excerpt from that recommendation letter here:

“I met Michael in the Fall of 2018 when he took my CS 259 Data Structures with Java Course. This was a five credit course only offered for top incoming students who could manage the material from two introductory core classes within a semester timeframe.

Our projects in CS 259 were complex, and Michael was a student who really dove in and tried to identify solutions on his own. Both the TA and I were often shocked about how he would find solutions without much guidance, often specialized functions that directly solved the problem. This meant he had to read through code documentation in order to find these functions and apply them. Honestly, this wasn't the best solution, and we told him. But, it was very tenacious, a characteristic not often seen in a first year student! Michael took the criticism well, and we worked with him to learn when to spend time re-implementing vs. looking up a solution.

I encouraged Michael to apply to McNair, given the productivity and persistence I had seen in the classroom. I also began him on a research project so he could determine if the fifth year MS degree (shared credit) or just pursuing a Ph.D. would be a better choice for him.”

Michael was the student we, as faculty, join academia to reach. He was a student who had been adopted out of foster care, served in the military, and who had come to our program to achieve a dream of being a computer scientist. While I would have rather have attended his graduation and thanked his adoptive parents and wife for lending him to us, I feel this degree is the least we can do to recognize his efforts in our program.

Thank you,
Prof. Lydia Tapia

