Dear Committee Members,

I have been a student of Trisha for the past 3 years. My first contact with Trisha was in the Spring of 2020, at the height of the pandemic. She conducted my admission interview to the CWC program, alongside another CWC member through a WhatsApp call. I knew from that moment that I would feel welcomed in the program, even part of the first cohort that was accepting international students. Trisha listened to my life experiences with great care. Joining this program was one of the factors that helped me decide to accept my admission offer to DU, as I knew that I would be surrounded by individuals who truly listened and cared about me, due to the way Trisha made me feel during my first connection with her.
I completed my first-year year entirely online, in my home country, thousands of miles away from the DU campus and my cohort friends. This experience was often isolating at times. I longed for a personal connection. I was exhausted and suffering from fatigue from all the zoom classes. But, Trisha's classes were something I looked forward to. The community that she helped was built revolved around ideas of empowerment and inclusion. This environment helped me keep up my motivation to stick through and follow my goals in my college journey. Trisha helped us cultivate self-love, recognize our limits, and nourish a desire to exercise leadership. After all, how could I be a leader without loving myself first? Trisha always reminded us of this priority. And she helped us cultivate a place where we loved each other too. She opened a space for me and other classmates to understand what it is to be a queer, female of color at DU and in the United States. I found a space for safe and healthy discourse about the discrimination I have experienced in my life. And for that, I am forever grateful.

In a recent Leadership Capstone class, she mentioned, "an individual cannot transform the world, but a group of empowered individuals can." Trisha shaped my classroom experience by transforming our roles from simple spectators to active agents of change. I found out in our leadership classes that my experiences are also life lessons. I also learned about the power of community-building and authenticity in academia. Trisha actively made me feel included, but more than that, I was also provided with the tools in her class to enact the change I want to see in the world, wherever I go.

The practices we engage in Trisha's class are life-changing. I am grateful to have encountered this group of powerful women and have Trisha as our instructor inside and outside the classroom. The work she is doing is transformational. I am sure she will keep impacting lives across the cohorts of CWC scholars and she deserves all the recognition for that.

Sincerely,

Bela Vilela