

AN ODE TO KELLI

From Kitten

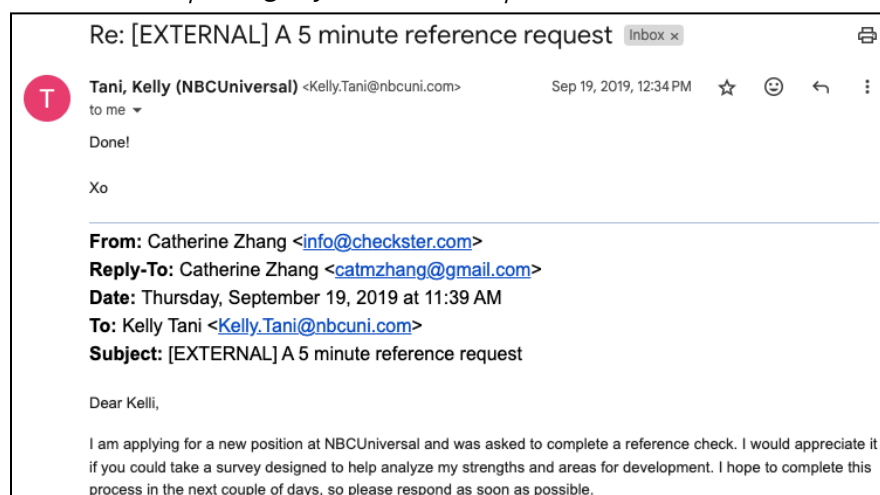
I met Kelli during my sophomore year at UCLA. Kelli was a senior and the director of my Student Alumni Association committee. I feel grateful to have met Kelli during this period of my life, because it was a formative time as I was exploring who I wanted to be. I instantly looked up to Kelli, and saw her as the older sister I never had.

Although we weren't best friends or in each other's closest circles, Kelli was always someone at the top of my list to talk to whenever I had a big life change. We even joked that she was my "mom." From job interviews to breakups, I would reach out and she always made the time to talk or see me. No matter how long or short, deep or lighthearted our conversations were, she was always an excellent active listener and gave her full attention. And I wasn't the only one reaching out—Kelli always periodically checked up on me too. The extraordinary part is that she did this with everyone. She took the little time she had after all of her activities and accomplishments to really dedicate herself to those around her.



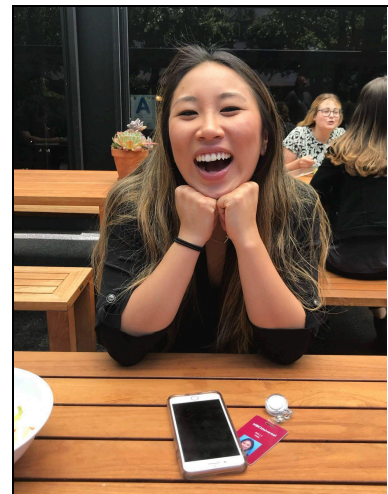
Kelli always looked out for people. She was one of my references to my first full-time job at NBCUniversal. It was my dream to work there, and to see her do it first was truly inspiring. Prior to graduating, I consulted her when I was panicking that I didn't have a job lined up and was unsure what to pursue. She gave me an invaluable piece of advice that I now give too—in the grand scheme of life, working a couple months earlier won't make a difference, and the time right after college is likely the only time you'll have to take a break. So I took Kelli's advice, took a few months off, and then landed my dream job at the time with her help.

(Kelli completing my reference request in less than an hour:)

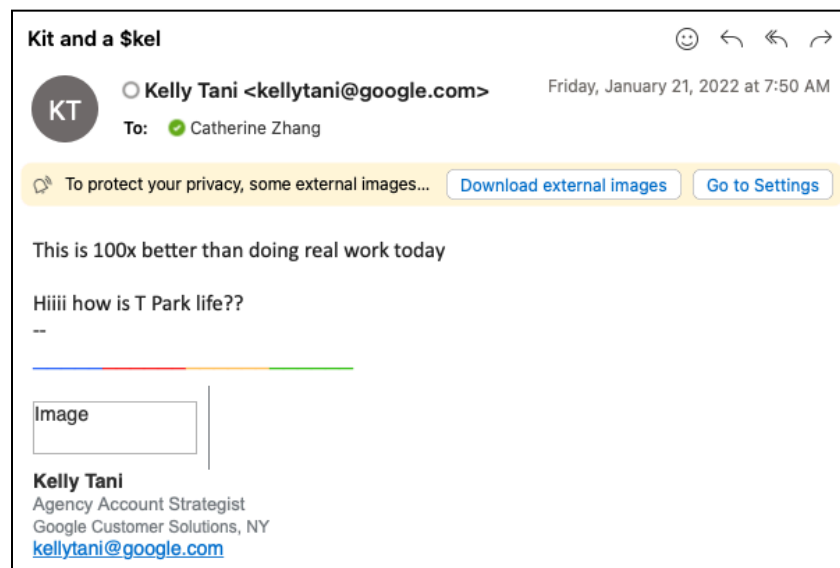
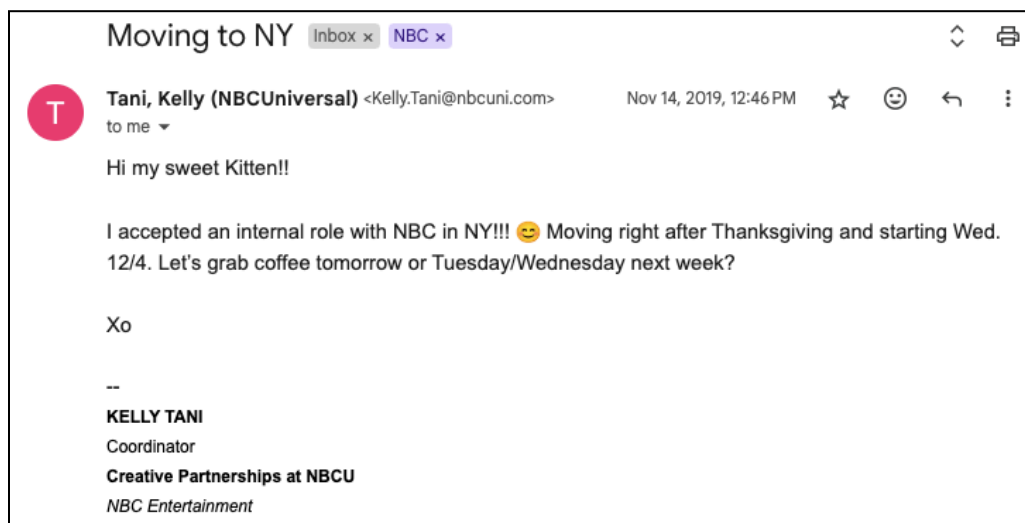


At NBCU, Kelli (or Kelly, professionally) would ask me to get coffee and we would chat. We had a little email chain to catch up too when we wanted to take a work break. I always admired her work ethic, attitude about career navigation, and achievements upon achievements. She was truly a superstar in all facets of life and never ceased to amaze everyone with what she was capable of accomplishing. Even after we both left NBCU, she would continue our email chain from Google.

(On the right: One of the times Kelli and I got lunch at the NBCU Commissary!)



(Some tidbits from our email chain)



Perhaps the most powerful memory I have of Kelli is an objectively small deed, but the impact on me was profound. One time at a party, she noticed I was trying to hide that something was bothering me and reached out about it after. This was during my sophomore year, when I was having a hard time and horrible at communicating how I felt. She brought me out to dinner and asked respectful yet meaningful questions, and I was truly astounded by her thoughtfulness and consideration. It is a simple yet significant gesture to observe something so subtle about someone and then follow through to make sure they're okay. No one else would do this other than Kelli Tani. This memory to me truly defines who Kelli was and the impact she had.

(Even in her dream job description, she wanted to help others and make the world a fairer, more equitable place for all. These are from some emails she sent.)

The other i'm thinking about is literally a dream job. it's doing some marketing work for community programs, such as encouraging women of color/black + latinx communities to train in computer science. Literal dream job but i'm thinking of doing

Ooof - no specific programs in mind. Certain causes I have a heart for, specifically retraining the US workforce. I personally think that so many people feel left out of the innovation in the past decade. And the lack of job/financial security leads to some of the political divide. Of course not that simple as that but I do have a heart for that topic. But I'll see where opportunities open in future years. It's so hard to do something fulfilling but also pays :(

Kelli was the best pseudo older sister and role model to me. She exemplified what it meant to be a kind, supportive, and nurturing person. She was the definition of "good" in its purest form. I think anyone who has ever interacted with her would agree, which speaks volumes about the type of person she was. Everyone adored her, because she truly was the best. She was one of the greatest people I've ever met and I am so grateful that I had the privilege to know someone like her. I will miss her dearly.

With the Utmost Love,
Catherine Zhang

