



30 December 2014

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing in support of Iris Fang's application to summer internship program at Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute. I am a Visiting Professor at Swarthmore College where I met Iris in Fall 2013. She was a student in my Comparative Vertebrate Anatomy (CVA) class. Before teaching at Swarthmore College, I taught, in varying capacities, at Yale University and the State University of New York at New Paltz and I have advised a series of independent student projects at both Swarthmore College and the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia. With this perspective, I recommend Iris as a student with great promise in the field of biology.

Iris received an A- in CVA and I was consistently impressed with her intellect and initiative to learn. As a student, she is quiet but committed. I have every confidence that she will continue to grow as she is already developing specific curiosities and considering ways to address those curiosities. After what sounds like a fascinating summer on the Chesapeake Bay with the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center, Iris shows a deep interest in the environmental influences on marine ecology and biodiversity. From conversations, I know that this interest extends beyond the coastal waters all the way to the deep ocean. When listening to Iris speak of this research experience, I am reminded that her strength is in her ability to generate ideas and to operate across disciplinary boundaries in order to bring an exciting perspective to her work. She is someone who thinks above the details, with a creativity that is grounded in real-world feasibility.

Throughout my time with Iris, I have observed her begin to open up more and work together with her fellow students to achieve common goals. This has continued during our most recent interaction in the Fall 2014 course, History of Life (HoL). Her ability to communicate scientific results to the broader scientific community and to her peers is newly confident and points to her impressive potential as a research colleague and mentor. She is already an impressive scientific writer, as was demonstrated to me by her co-authored paper that concluded her time in History of Life. Her scientific writing is sophisticated, well-informed, and buoyed by the quality of the ideas that she is able to consistently generate. She finished HoL with an A-, a high grade indeed for a challenging course.

I think that Iris's transition to postgraduate study will be an important one for her. She addresses research questions with creative solutions. She is building collaborations that are generating exciting and intellectually valuable product. A program like the summer internship program at Monterey Bay Aquarium Research Institute will be an excellent

opportunity for her to continue on this trajectory while focusing specifically on her central interests. Her focus and her commitments to her studies, her research, and her peers convince me of her promise and so I offer unreserved support for her application. Please email or call should you like to discuss her application further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Downs', with a stylized, elongated flourish extending to the right.

Jason Downs
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