



MBARI
Summer Internship Program
7700 Sandholdt Rd
Moss Landing, CA 95039

January 9, 2015

Dear Dr. Matsumoto:

I am writing this recommendation letter on behalf of Jessica Whelpley and her MBARI Internship Application. I have known Jessie since Fall 2012 when she enrolled in my Human Physiology lecture and laboratory course. Following this, Jessie was one of 7 students who I supervised during a two-week Vertebrate Zoology field experience in Brazil in January 2013. Therefore, I have been able to observe Jessie's work ethic, critical thinking skills and dedication both in the classroom and in the field.

Human Physiology (BI262) is an upper-level course aimed toward pre-health professions students, in which I expect all of the students to learn the detailed physiology of all of the organ systems. The depth and breadth of knowledge that I require is often a challenge for many students. Although Jessie's interests were focused in Marine Biology, she was always well-prepared for class, dedicated to studying and learning the material and able to draw connections between lecture and lab. Jessie earned an A- in the course, ranking 6th out of 29 students.

As part of Human Physiology, there was a mandatory lab component. Assignments included learning several physiological techniques such as electromyography and ECG, designing and executing a group research project based on the biomechanics of human locomotion, and thorough dissection of several preserved organs. Jessie performed well in all aspects of the lab- she learned to run experiments and analyze data effectively, she was a natural leader, keeping her group organized and on-task when completing their experiments and she had excellent and careful dissection skills. Furthermore, she communicated her research and coursework effectively through lab reports and two oral presentations.

Students who have taken Vertebrate Zoology or Evolution are invited to participate in a two-week field experience to a sea turtle hatchery and a biological reserve in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Each student is required to execute a research experiment in each habitat (hatchery and jungle), and after returning to Fairfield, analyze and present the data. Students worked independently, but they were also expected to help their peers in data collection. Jessie worked in conjunction with Projecto Tamar to design her research on the effects of light exposure to sea turtle hatchling orientation to the ocean. Briefly, a box was placed over a nest so that the hatchlings were never exposed to daylight. At night, the hatchlings were released to the ocean at areas of varying light intensity. As expected, in

areas of high human activity (restaurants, street lights, parks), hatchlings did not orient to the ocean. The results of this collaborative effort were submitted for publication.

On a personal note, Jessie is funny, intellectually curious and considerate of others. She was well-respected by her fellow students and often looked to for direction and/or guidance on their projects. She was always willing to help others, whether the task was manual labor or tedious data collection. Jessie worked in constantly changing and often undesirable conditions in the field and always maintained a positive attitude. For example, the data collection for Jessie's projects primarily occurred at night, following a tiring day of assisting on other projects. I never heard her complain about the long hours and she was always enthusiastic and energetically completed the task at hand.

I cannot speak on behalf of the content of Jessie's internship proposal because it is not within my research expertise. However, I do feel that her research experiences at Fairfield University and her internships at Blue Hill and the Smithsonian have provided her with the necessary skills to work independently to complete a research project. Furthermore, this internship would allow her to begin data collection for a dissertation. She is dedicated to learning in general, and more specially, I have seen how she immerses herself in the subject matter. I am confident that she will excel in this program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Shannon", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Shannon P. Gerry, Ph.D.
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