Roberta Parrish

Human Resources Department

Sierra Social Service Agency

Central City, CA 45882

Dear Ms. Parrish,

 I would like to take this opportunity to recommend Melissa Johnson to you as a candidate for the case manager position that is currently open in your organization. I believe she is a perfect fit for this position because of the following roles she carried out in my class for the final two semesters of her undergraduate career at IUPUI.

Melissa used her strong academic, communication, and leadership skills in her role as an undergraduate teaching assistant (UTA) in my B103 Orientation to a Major in Psychology class by providing the students she mentored with insightful and constructive feedback on their weekly writing assignments. She performed her role in exactly the manner I demanded; she used her well-developed attention to detail to evaluate her protégés’ work and bring their attention to APA-style errors, but did so in a positive and supportive manner. I have professionalized the UTA position in B103 by requiring my UTAs to assume the role of academic case managers who use the CREATE model to produce and sustain academic success in my students. CREATE is an acronym that represents the following six roles performed by my B103 UTAs: Counselor, Referral Agent, Evaluator, Advocate, Teacher, and Encourager. Melissa was responsible for a small “family” of five B103 students, and she successfully carried out these roles in a remarkably dependable manner in the following ways.

In her role as a **counselor**, Melissa developed an understanding of her family members (FMs) and used this knowledge—paired with her experience as a successful B103 student—to model for them how to adapt to and succeed in the class by utilizing their strengths and strengthening their weaknesses. She also took the initiative to help her FMs understand things about themselves that could prevent them from performing well in the class (e.g., that they can no longer procrastinate and expect to perform as well as they have in the past). She accomplished this by developing a trusting relationship with her FMs, which permitted honest and insightful examinations of dysfunctional academic behaviors (e.g., an unwillingness to use feedback to improve performance) and the development of more functional behaviors. One of the most important components of this role is the ability to learn how to develop a professional relationship with FMs. This is not an easy relationship for undergraduate students to develop with each other, but Melissa displayed this ability very successfully by creating strategies to handle her relationship with her FMs in a professionally cooperative manner both inside and outside the classroom.

In her role as a **referral agent**, Melissa identified her FMs’ academic challenges and their subsequent need for assistance that required the utilization of specialized campus resources. She was then able to connect them with these resources to eliminate or decrease the severity of these challenges (e.g., Adaptive Educational Services, the Advising Office, the Career Center, the Writing Center, and the Office of Counseling and Psychological Services) in a respectful but effectively persistent manner.

In her role as an **evaluator**, Melissa used her strong analytical thinking skills to assess the quality of the APA style of her FMs’ writing assignments and provided them with constructive and supportive feedback that enabled them to improve the quality of their future assignments. Part of this role involved careful record keeping and the production of a comprehensive end-of-semester case report of each of her FMs’ academic accomplishments.

In her role as an **advocate**, Melissa worked hard to support her FMs when their busy and complicated lives made it difficult for them to meet my high academic standards. In these instances, Melissa acted as an advocate to lessen the academic cost of not meeting the requirements of the class by explaining the causes of an FM’s poor performance to me so I could determine if an exception in class policy should be made (e.g., the extension of a deadline). She also served as a role model for her students by dealing effectively with the stresses of her own very complicated life and showing a remarkably mature degree of self-control when dealing with students who were frustrated with their performance in my class.

In her role as a **teacher**, Melissa used the strong knowledge of APA style she developed as a student in B103 to enable her FMs to acquire this challenging and demanding professional skill. She also taught her FMs “by example” by modeling the characteristics of a successful psychology major such as involvement in departmental activities, the establishment of productive relationships with faculty, and the ability to set academic and professional goals and to create and implement strategies to achieve these goals. I was particularly impressed with her ability to help her FMs learn the value of academic integrity by stressing the crucial importance of the APA-style guidelines for avoiding plagiarism.

In her role as an **encourager**, Melissa motivated her FMs to perform up to their optimal levels by enabling them to understand the value of the class, identifying and reinforcing their academic progress, and providing the support they needed to complete this rigorous class. Melissa was able to use her kindness, compassion, and empathy to bring about positive behavioral changes in her FMs in this role. Although this is perhaps the least academic of the six UTA roles in B103, it is probably the most crucial in this very demanding class. It is the role in which Melissa’s exceptionally strong interpersonal skills enabled her to excel as a TA.

In conclusion, Melissa is exactly the type of young woman I would hire as a case manager in your organization if I were in the position to do so because she is the type of person who I would want as a case manager for any member of my family if they were ever in need of such services. Please give her application your full attention. I have no doubt that Melissa will become one of the best case managers in your organization.

Sincerely yours,

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Drew C. Appleby, PhD

Professor Emeritus of Psychology

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