

November 28, 2020

Foundation for the Advancement of Health Education (FAHE)
Delbert Oberteuffer Scholarship
Scholarship Selection Committee

Re: Letter of support for applicant Caitlin Holden

Dear Selection Committee Members,

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter in support of Ms. Caitlin Holden's nomination for the Delbert Oberteuffer Scholarship. I chair Caitlin's doctoral committee, and have known her since she was a Master's student in our Health Education program. From her enthusiasm for learning to her exercise of important leadership skills, Caitlin represents one of the finest doctoral students our program has had (and, please note: we have had *many* stellar students throughout my 20 years here at Texas A&M University – therefore I don't say this lightly).

I also confirm that Ms. Holden has completed the minimum 6 hour-requirement for this scholarship, and attest to the validity of her GPA score.

Academically, Caitlin has already made important contributions as a student, and stands to make an indelible mark in the field, upon graduation. Half-way through her doctoral training she has *already* authored or co-authored 8 refereed articles published (and under review) in high-impact journals such as the *Journal of Adolescent Health* and the *Journal of Sex Research*. Moreover, she also has led, or contributed to, more than 30 oral and 20 poster presentations at some of our most prestigious professional venues.

Caitlin's scholarly productivity is impressive, especially given her stage of training. Not only is the sheer volume remarkable, the quality of both the journals and the conferences in which she disseminates her work is of the highest caliber. These venues represent prestigious places for presenting her research and, as such, communicate how competitive her work is, for the acceptance criteria are rigorous, and the competition, quite stiff.

Caitlin's professional (and personal) goal is to improving the health of children and youth, both in the US and worldwide. Evidence of this sharp focus can be found in the topics of her currently published articles. Soon, however Caitlin's dissertation also will leave its mark in the field of health promotion. Her dissertation stands to initiate a vital dialogue regarding how sex educators (in particular, those working in school settings) should be trained. Her study will call for a reform in the mainstream philosophy underlying sexuality educators' training, to include attention to their professional *identity*.

The current emphasis, when training sexuality educators has been, until recently, on providing teachers with skills, strategies, and techniques to manage their classrooms and the content to be delivered. Nonetheless, many sexuality educators indicate they lack confidence in teaching human sexuality — possibly not due to lack of skills or strategies, but due to potential dissonances between their personal beliefs/values and the content they are charged with teaching. Identity salience

addresses these beliefs/values and — if proven to be relevant in shaping educators' confidence — may suggest a shift or a reform in the way these educators are trained to teach. Therefore, I strongly believe Caitlin's work stands to spark an important (and long overdue) dialogue within the field of sexuality education, regarding how sex educators are (and should be) trained. Her professional goals include serving as a faculty member at a research-oriented university, so she may continue to influence the field through knowledge development and training of future professionals. I am eager to observe the impact of her work and have no doubt she will make an impressive contribution!

Caitlin's career focus and choice of dissertation topic demonstrate not only her investment in the health of children and youth, but also quite a bit of courage. As she tackles topics that are, in some scholars' views, "controversial", she exhibits the patience, fortitude, and open-mindedness that accompany those who contribute significantly to the field. I have no doubt that Caitlin will become one of these significant contributors – and FAHE will be proud to have invested in her development!

Aside from her scholarship, Caitlin is also outstanding among her peers due to her leadership skills. Her CV lists various examples of her leadership roles: from moderating of sessions in professional meetings, to working in schools with health educators and students. Moreover, Caitlin is also a remarkable team player. One example of Caitlin's outstanding team-player performance is her volunteering as a POWER Consultant. I created POWER Services to function as peer-led support for graduate students', post-docs' and junior faculty's academic writing. POWER Consultants volunteer one hour per week of their time, to meet with academic writers. Consultants provide feedback and/or tips, techniques and emotional support, as needed. Caitlin has been a POWER Consultant since 2018 and has graciously served many graduate students in this capacity.

Coupled with her academic and leadership successes, Caitlin is also a lovely human being, and delightful to work with; she is people-centered, kind, and generous. I believe Caitlin embodies the spirit of the Delbert Oberteuffer Scholarship in the most comprehensive, well-rounded way possible. I am quite certain you will be hard-pressed to find a more outstanding ambassador for FAHE and its mission!

Respectfully yours,

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