

November 8, 2020

Dear Scholarship Committee Members,

It is with great enthusiasm I write to support Ms. Caitlin Holden's nomination for the Foundation for the Advancement of Health Education's (FAHE) Delbert Oberteuffer Scholarship. In alignment with the award criteria, Caitlin is an outstanding leader who is truly dedicated to advancing the field of health education. Below I will briefly outline her potential and some of the outstanding characteristics that make her a deserving applicant for this award.

In the fall of 2020, Caitlin began her fourth year as a PhD student in the Health Education doctoral program within the Department of Health & Kinesiology at Texas A&M University. Caitlin has matured personally, professionally, and academically during her tenure and has become more polished and confident in her abilities to teach, research, serve, and advocate on behalf of others. Her undergraduate health studies focused primarily on community health education, giving her the tools needed for planning, implementing, and evaluating health education programs. Her master's degree program centered on school health education, resulting in her earning a K-12 teaching certificate. Caitlin's master's studies provided her the unique opportunity to work with a variety of professors and populations to further explore her research interests. Since then, she has focused her efforts in teacher preparation, pedagogy, and quality sexuality education in schools.

Throughout her graduate teaching assistantships, Caitlin has displayed a passion for education through delivering high quality instruction. Caitlin has been involved with a variety of undergraduate courses, serving as a graduate teaching assistant, under the guidance of myself and Dr. Beth McNeill. The courses she has assisted with focus on developing quality school health educators – such as *Health and Physical Activity for Children*, *Teaching School in a Modern Society*, *Health Education Methodology*, and *Elementary School Health Instruction*. Caitlin is committed to helping undergraduate students flourish in their academic studies and dedicated to creating an environment in which all students feel confident in their abilities to become future educational leaders. Caitlin has also worked as a graduate research assistant under the guidance of Dr. Kelly Wilson on an implementation grant where she was responsible for serving as a liaison between grantees, community partners, and federal funding agencies. In this role, Caitlin built rapport and community support with both grantee sites, enabling increased trust and success among all stakeholders involved.

Caitlin is also involved in research specific to school and adolescent health. She has worked closely with Drs. Kelly Wilson and Beth McNeill on reviewing dating violence curriculum and planning sexuality education for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Currently, Caitlin assists me with the PAWS for Reading program where we strive to promote literacy and physical activity patterns among elementary-aged students through the use of adoptable dogs from the local animal shelter.

In 2017, Caitlin was awarded the Huffine's Student Research grant, which she used to fund her research while studying abroad in Helsinki, Finland. Her research examined how the world-renowned educational system in Finland influenced pre-service educators' cultural competency and professional preparation. She has also completed additional research projects in which she analyzed the correlation between high quality physical activity and mental health programs in schools while studying abroad in the United

Kingdom and Ireland in May 2018. In 2019, she was awarded the Dean's Graduate Award from the College of Education and Human Development in recognition for her impressive academic, research, and service efforts. Recently, she applied and was awarded the 2020 Huffine's Institute Student Research grant to help support and fund her dissertation efforts.

Caitlin also has an impressive service record with the Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) in which she has received numerous awards and recognition for her achievements related to school health education. She was selected as the recipient of the R. Brick Lancaster Community Health Internship Award where she developed and implemented a health education training geared towards increasing pre-service educators' self-efficacy in implementing sexuality education in schools. She also served as a Collegiate Champion where she was responsible for sharing news and information regarding health education, promoting award opportunities to students, and hosting health education events around campus and the local community.

Caitlin has been an active member of Eta Sigma Gamma (ESG) since 2013 and currently serves as the vice president of Texas A&M University's Alpha Pi chapter. In this position, she is responsible for collaborating with campus and community stakeholders in hosting monthly awareness events. She has been involved in several different cornerstone projects, in which members have taught nutrition education to local elementary school students, promoted walking initiatives for faculty and staff, distributed condoms to promote safe sex practices, provided mental health resources, and created a safe space to support survivors affected by the #MeToo movement. In the fall of 2017, Caitlin volunteered the Alpha Pi chapter to adopt a classroom in Dickinson, Texas which was labeled as a "complete loss" after Hurricane Harvey. Caitlin brainstormed a plan to collect supplies and support the community in recovering after such a devastating loss. Together, a team of officers and myself travelled nearly three hours to deliver donations and personally meet with those affected by the storm.

Caitlin serves as an effective mentor and is very intentional in promoting undergraduate involvement as she sets large goals to expand ESG's reach in delivering health education programming to others. Some of these programs include Safe Spring Break, HIV & Syphilis Testing, World Mental Health Day, Puppies in the Plaza, and Glow in the Dark Hip Hop. Indeed, Caitlin and the Alpha Pi chapter have been quite successful in winning prestigious awards due to their dedication and commitment to teaching, service, advocacy, and research. These awards include individually winning ESG's Elena M. Sliepcevich Professional Development Award and the John P. McGovern National Scholarship Award and collectively earning the Chapter Excellence Award since 2017.

Perhaps what impresses me most about Caitlin is her unwavering work ethic, positive attitude, and passion for health education. Caitlin is one of those students who will leave a long-lasting impression on me; she is an impressive, highly qualified applicant truly deserving of FAHE's Delbert Oberteuffer Scholarship. It is without a doubt, she has been a remarkable leader – one who has the potential to grow and excel in countless, meaningful ways. If you inquire any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone at (979) 862-4428 or via email at meagan.shipley@tamu.edu. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Meagan Shipley, PhD, CHES