

**NYU****SCHOOL OF GLOBAL
PUBLIC HEALTH****Ralph J. DiClemente, PhD***Professor of Social and Behavioral
Sciences
Chair of the Department of Social and
Behavioral Sciences
Associate Dean for Public Health
Innovation***New York University****School of Global Public Health**
708 Broadway, Suite 625
New York, NY 10003**M:** 678 641 2744**E:** rjd438@nyu.edu

Dr. Delbert Oberteuffer Scholarship
Foundation for the Advancement of Health Education

October 26th, 2021

To the Foundation for the Advancement of Health Education Scholarship Committee:

Over the course of my career, Marcia Ash is without a doubt one of the most impressive students I have had the pleasure to advise. Marcia is a smart, capable, and passionate student – I am confident that she has a long career ahead in the field of health education with a focus on advancing health outcomes among children. As such, I could not recommend Marcia more highly for the Dr. Delbert Oberteuffer Scholarship.

I met Marcia in 2016 through her work with the Emory Center for Contemplative Science and Compassion-Based Ethics, and I then became Marcia's academic advisor when she pursued her Master's in Public Health beginning in 2017. In these capacities, I have had the pleasure of watching Marcia flourish as an incredibly dedicated student and researcher. As soon as Marcia joined Emory's Rollins School of Public Health, she hit the ground running. Marcia began her studies at Rollins with a clear research focus that she tailored her coursework and research around. Marcia's research as an MPH student centered on her interest in Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT), a compassion-meditation program developed at Emory. CBCT has been studied among a variety of participant populations, and it has been specifically adapted and tested with youth. In my opinion, this program holds a lot of promise to promote public mental health including among children– and Marcia is one of the key players driving the research effort.

During Marcia's first semester as an MPH student, she approached me to ask if I would consider supervising a directed study in which she would like to investigate Western psychological theories and their relevancy to CBCT in order to create a conceptual model articulating possible change mechanisms. I will be honest – I thought this might be a little beyond the scope of what a first year MPH student could do. Nevertheless, I agreed to supervise her directed study – and wow, did Marcia prove me wrong! Marcia crafted an incredibly coherent and thoughtful model. To develop the model, Marcia orchestrated group meetings between researchers across Emory University. CBCT is a well-researched program but up until that point it lacked a theoretical frame, so this was an important advancement. To date, Marcia has presented the model she developed at three academic conferences and published the accompanying manuscript as first author.

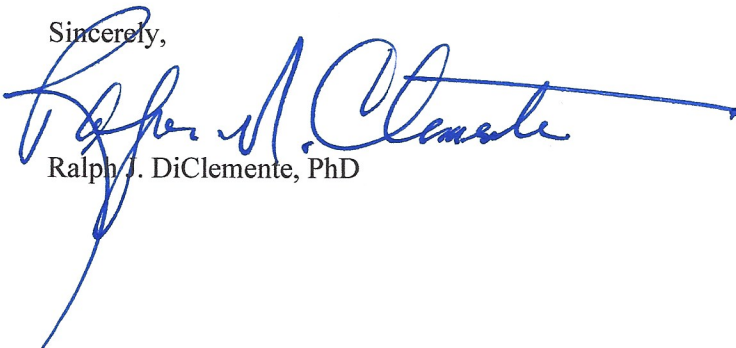
Although I moved to NYU during Marcia's MPH program, I still co-chaired Marcia's MPH thesis in which she conducted a quantitative analysis to assess the feasibility of CBCT for a population of hospital chaplain-residents. Marcia utilized the model she developed to consider the ways in which CBCT promotes resilience and compassion. Marcia has been extremely devoted to this project. From an advisor's perspective, Marcia needs little oversight – she is a driven and independent worker. That being said, she is the type of student who knows when and how to speak up when she needs help or feedback. I have been consistently impressed with the caliber of work that Marcia has shown me. She is also quite prolific and interested in ensuring that her research informs future health education practice.

In 2019, Marcia was awarded the Woodruff Fellowship, an extremely prestigious fellowship at Emory only given to the most competitive applicants across all fields of graduate study, to pursue her PhD in Behavioral, Social, and Health Education Sciences at Emory's Rollins School of Public Health. Since starting her doctorate, Marcia has been increasingly interested in focusing her attention to addressing health disparities with a focus on children. She has worked on numerous projects in this space including interventions to address school-based racism as well as studies on predictors of medical mistrust among youth of color during the COVID-19 pandemic. For Marcia's dissertation, she is combining her interests in maternal and child mental health as well as mindfulness-based practices to conduct a pre-implementation study examining barriers and facilitators to integrating mindfulness-based services into obstetrics care to improve perinatal mental health outcomes for Black women. This is critical research to advance health of youth as we know perinatal mental health is associated with later child development.

In addition to Marcia's numerous research accomplishments, I think it is critical to point out her academic success both as a student and instructor. Marcia has maintained a perfect 4.0 GPA throughout her rigorous coursework as both a Master's and Doctoral student. She is widely known within the Behavioral, Social, and Health Education Sciences Department as an exceptional student whom professors delight in teaching. Marcia, however, is also an excellent teacher herself. She has served as teaching associate for several master's level courses, and I have been thoroughly impressed by the dynamic way in which she can distill complex topics such that they are interesting and accessible to others.

Lastly, in addition to being a straight A-student, a budding research investigator, and dynamic teacher, I would like to add that Marcia is a delight to work with. She is warm, friendly, and inquisitive. Like Dr. Delbert Oberteuffer, Marcia is a true renaissance woman whose expertise spans many topics and methodologies that are critical to advancing the health of children and youth. I look forward to celebrating Marcia's future accomplishments within the field of health education. I am confident she will be a leader in advancing health equity and mental health outcomes among children. I am happy to recommend her as a most outstanding applicant for the Dr. Delbert Oberteuffer Scholarship. Please contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ralph J. DiClemente", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ralph J. DiClemente, PhD