

November 5, 2021

Dear Scholarship Selection Committee:

It is with great pleasure I recommend Elizabeth Obekpa for the Dr. Delbert Oberteuffer Scholarship. I have enjoyed working with and mentoring Elizabeth academically and professionally at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. Over the past four years, I have watched Elizabeth grow into a knowledgeable and excellent student, with a great passion for promoting the sexual and reproductive health of adolescent girls and women and LGBTQ+ persons in Nigeria.

In the fall semester of 2018, Elizabeth was a student in my Health Promotion Theory course, and she excelled in classroom examinations. Elizabeth distinguished herself by writing well researched abstracts and papers and she has shown an aptitude for conducting literature reviews, critical thinking, and applying the theories to her population and health problem of interest. Elizabeth's academic performance is superior. She is one of my top students. Elizabeth is intelligent and has a great aptitude for learning. In addition to her major and minor course load, she is taking courses to get certificates in Global Health, Health Disparities, Maternal and Child Health, and Leadership Theory and Practice. To my knowledge, she is the first student to get these many certificates in our doctoral program.

Elizabeth sat for the preliminary examination in December 2019 and passed all three sections of the exam on her first attempt, which is outstanding because many of our students take the exam twice before passing. The exam evaluated Elizabeth's understanding of using theory to design an intervention and study design and data analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of the intervention. Elizabeth demonstrated excellent command of these core doctoral-level competencies and she currently has a GPA of 3.9, which is a clear indication of her intellect, hard work, and dedication to her studies.

I employ Elizabeth as a graduate research assistant on two Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) programs. The Integrated Treatment Program (ITP) aims to increase access to and improve the quality of community behavioral health services for sexual and gender minorities with serious mental illness or substance use disorders, and individuals with co-occurring disorders. The Enhanced Integrated Treatment Program with Sexual Health in Recovery (EITP-SHIR) program aims to increase access to treatment for African-American and Latino gay men

with co-occurring substance use and mental health diagnoses and sex/drug-linked behavior. Elizabeth is doing a great job coordinating and managing both projects for me. She is hardworking, dedicated to her duties, and is able to work with minimal supervision.

Elizabeth has demonstrated excellent leadership qualities and outstanding performance in her job duties. Some of her responsibilities include writing study protocols, consent forms, questionnaires, and other study related documents; applying for IRP approval; executing study protocols including data collection, entry, quality control, and management; and quantitative and qualitative analysis. She has conducted monitoring and evaluation of program activities and objectives and utilized program data to make recommendations to improve activities and track improvements. Elizabeth has demonstrated outstanding leadership skills and performance in her job duties. Elizabeth has developed reports and made recommendations to the implementing partner and funder; and she has presented findings from ITP to a diverse group of public health education professionals and students in Texas.

For her dissertation, Elizabeth will analyze data from ITP to assess recovery capital among sexual and gender minorities with substance use dependency and negative mental health outcomes. Elizabeth is excelling in our doctoral program and her research on recovery capital among sexual and gender minorities is innovative and will address the literature gap on sexual and gender minority health outcomes. Her research will impact future practice and research on mental and substance use disparities, globally. Elizabeth has a remarkable aptitude for learning and without a doubt, a bright future ahead of her.

Elizabeth is dedicated to improving the sexual and reproductive health of adolescent girls and women in Nigeria. This is demonstrated by her volunteering activities as a Pharmacist and Public Health Educator for internally displaced persons and individuals in low-resource communities in Nigeria. She has provided sexual and reproductive health education and male condoms to prevent the transmission of HIV, STIs, and unplanned pregnancies; and tested. In addition, Elizabeth is formulating an innovative research and practice agenda that will impact the lives of adolescent girls and women in Nigeria. She has culturally adapted an evidence-based adolescent HIV, STI, and pregnancy prevention curriculum developed by our faculty called It's Your Game...Keep It Real, for future implementation with adolescents in Nigeria. Once Elizabeth graduates from the UTHealth School of Public Health, I expect her to become an outstanding public health leader in Nigeria.

As an international student, the funding opportunities for Elizabeth are limited. Every effort to ensure Elizabeth receives funding to continue her education should be made. It is my honest opinion that Elizabeth is the ideal candidate to receive the Dr. Delbert Oberteuffer Scholarship. If you need any additional information, please contact me at 713.500.9974 or by email at Johnny.M.Wilkerson@uth.tmc.edu.

Sincerely,



J. Michael Wilkerson, PhD, MPH