



December 30, 2022

The Dr. Becky J. Smith Scholarship

Dear Review Committee,

Please accept this highly enthusiastic letter in support of Mae Ria, a stellar undergraduate in the Community Health Education program in the Department of Public Health Education at UNC Greensboro who is applying for The Dr. Becky J. Smith Scholarship. Additionally, as someone who served with Becky Smith as a member of the AAHE board as well as chairing multiple AAHE committees, I saw first-hand, at the highest level, Dr. Smith's professional and personal commitment to students who espouse the value, long history, ethos, and challenging work of the health education profession.

In fall 2022 I had Mae in my HEA 308 Introduction to Public Health course and from this experience I feel that I can give you a glowing recommendation. As the Director of both the PhD and MPH programs in Public Health Education, I would enthusiastically recruit a student of Mae's caliber to enroll into our program as well as hire for a job.

As a student Mae was highly intelligent, extremely personable, resilient, and deeply committed. She earned an A in my course and her work was always stellar. One example of her commitment to the community health education program here is a bit unexpected. The class that I taught in which Mae was a student was at 9:30 a.m. in the morning. I have never had an attendance policy, and one unexpected result of the COVID pandemic and students learning virtually seems to have resulted in lower attendance in face-to-face classes, at least in my case. There were however a handful of students that never missed class and Mae was one of them. In fact, I called them my 212's. As you know at 211 degrees water is hot, but at 212 water boils and creates steam and steam can power great engines. The point here is it takes that one extra degree to go from good to great, from hot to boiling. Mae gave that extra step every class.

On a personal level Mae has had an upbringing that many students sitting around her may not appreciate. Escaping from a war-torn country as a five-year-old, Mae knew firsthand the hardships many refugees have in moving to a new country; having to navigate the language, the medical care system, and the education system. In getting to know Mae, as I have on occasion sitting with her in my office exploring her career options and goals, I have been more than impressed with her ability to process and retain information, and to work as hard as she could to make a better life for herself and her family. I could not be prouder that she is giving me the opportunity to recommend her here and I will always be in her corner as she strives to give back to her Refugee community in the future as a community health educator.

Mae espouses the attributes that I remember from Dr. Smith. In my direct observation Mae has all the qualities that Becky would support - she is knowledgeable, personable, dedicated and goes the extra mile. I recommend her with all alacrity. Please do contact me should you like any further information.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Mike Perko".

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