

November 26, 2023

To the Dr. Becky J. Smith Scholarship Committee:

I am submitting this letter in support of Kathryn (Katie) Hintz' application for this prestigious scholarship, as I consider her to be a worthy candidate. Having had Katie in multiple courses as a professor and the Director of the Public Health program at Western Michigan University, as well as currently serving as the National Eta Sigma Gamma President, I believe I am highly qualified to comment on Katie's skills as a student, vision as a health education professional, and character as a person. I can also verify that Katie is indeed a senior at Western Michigan University majoring in public health and currently carries a 3.68 GPA.

As a student, Katie is exceptional. She consistently produces at the highest level within her cohort of peers where her work is focused, is comprehensive, and embodies health education competencies. As a part of our curriculum our students attend the SOPHE Advocacy Summit and following that engage in an advocacy-based research project that is then submitted for presentation at the SOPHE spring annual conference. Katie is an author on one of these submissions. She is also author on a Photovoice research project in which she engaged while in South Africa. Within our program we also engage in numerous experiential activities, of which Katie typically serves as a group lead. This is not unusual for Katie, though, as she has leadership experience, including being President of our Eta Sigma Gamma chapter. Katie is the ideal student we strive to have in our courses and programs, and her ability to conceptualize complex issues, develop solutions, and implement plans puts her in the top percentile of all students I have taught over the past 31 years.

As a health education professional, Katie has a clear vision of what and where she is destined to make an impact. Maternal-child services is where she has focused her studies and where she desires to plant her seeds, which will no doubt grow into branches that are far reaching. Her passion and commitment to the betterment of those she serves is abundant and will propel her into a career that makes a difference in the lives of others. Katie currently serves as an intern for our local health department and is committed to the health education profession, as evidenced by her involvement with both SOPHE and the Great Lakes Chapter of SOPHE. In addition, Katie has a keen understanding of the NCHEC/SOPHE health education competencies and will be taking the CHES exam in April 2024. She also aspires to complete an MPH either following or within a year or two of graduation. As she left my office today, she commented, "I'd like to be a professor someday." That is someone who has a vision for where they are going.

As a person, Katie has an unshakeable character. I saw this firsthand when she took part on a three-week public health study abroad program to South Africa. While we were abroad, we encountered numerous diverse and heart wrenching situations that required students to get out of their own experience and merge themselves into the culture. Katie's personality of caring, kindness, and compassion aided not only herself but those around her in humbling themselves to being open to both learning and assisting in improving the lives of those they encountered. Not too many students have the maturity to see this need and act upon it for the betterment of all.

I am proud to submit this recommendation and encourage you to contact me at bensley@wmich.edu or 269-716-2301 should you need any further information regarding Katie's worthiness for this award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Bensley', with a horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

Robert J. Bensley, PhD, MCHES®
Program Director and Professor of Public Health
National Eta Sigma Gamma President