



THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA
GREENSBORO

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Foundation for the Advancement of Health Education
Dr. Becky J. Smith Scholarship

Reference letter for: Malcolm Johnson

Dear Dr. Becky J. Smith Scholarship Committee,



I start this letter with a very honest statement. In recommending Malcolm Johnson, an undergraduate student of mine in the Department of Public Health Education at UNC Greensboro for the Dr. Becky J. Smith Scholarship, I was able to read a writing sample detailing Malcolm's life and his absolute struggle (and tenacity) in trying to get a foothold on his future. It impacted me profoundly and I know while this is a different way to begin a recommendation letter I wanted to begin there. As with most reference letters, the resume that we ask for and the hard work we see in the classroom are vital details for sure, but the stories, man the stories are the reason we see such hard work in many cases, leading to the focus in the classroom and the drive to expand the sections of the resume. I met Malcolm in my HEA 308 Introduction to Public Health class this fall. Malcolm stuck out for many reasons, not the least of which was his desire right up front to work for the CDC. Big big goals worthy of an upbringing of grit and resilience. He has my word I will be there to help in any way I can.

In the spirit of Dr. Becky Smith, who I was fortunate to have worked with as a student chairing AAHE committees, as a member of the AAHE board and also on some entrepreneurial endeavors, I see in Malcolm the same way of seeing potential and opportunity that Becky saw for the Health Education profession (and in a student like me). Malcolm and I have shared a few conversations in my office about why his passion for health education could help future generations and what specifically he could do to alleviate health challenges in the world. I have no doubt that he will succeed given his track record at UNCG:

- 3.25 GPA – Community Health Education, minor in sociology
- Resident Advisor in campus dormitory
- Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC) in High School
- Panelist – UNCG Student Conduct Board
- Applicant – Michigan School of Public Health Summer Leadership Fellows Program
- Career goal – work for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

As you read Malcolm's personal statement, given his family being first generation American and not understanding the culture of navigating high school and college systems, he missed opportunities that many of us take for granted. He praises his family for love and support growing up but always felt a few steps behind in terms of being placed in the right classroom or understanding the importance of applying to college and writing college essays - a little fish in a big pond as he tells it. As my own 18 year old son has spent the better part of this year focused on writing essays and applying to colleges I feel for Malcolm

who was not even aware of the focus that needs to be placed on these efforts till it was very late in the game. This is a kid who had to take the lead in directing his own life, who joined JROTC in high school, who dual enrolled at the local community college to position himself for his future career efforts. This is a kid who is driven to succeed!

In closing, having spent 16 of my 27 years in higher education serving in administrative roles whose duties included admitting hundreds of students based on what they might contribute to the unit I say that if a student of Malcolm's ilk were to apply not only would I admit them, but I would also nominate them for every award and scholarship possible to entice them to join us. Then once they graduated, I would hire them.

I ask the committee to strongly consider Malcolm Johnson for the FAHE Dr. Becky Smith Scholarship. Malcolm impresses me every single time I get a chance to speak with him. We need Malcolm to lead and be a leader for the next generation of health educators and I recommend him with all alacrity. Please do contact me should you like any further information.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Mike Perko". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Mike" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Perko".

Mike Perko, Ph.D., MCHES, FAAHE
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