Re: Letter of support for David Moulton

To whomever it may concern,

I'm writing on behalf of David Moulton's application for the Jordan L. Burke Memorial Award (Best Graduate TA Award). I believe David to be an exemplary teaching assistant and an individual of tremendous character with considerable leadership skills.

I knew of David before meeting him personally. As a student studying fish conservation and management, I've had the opportunity to read about David's research on the stresses of rising temperature on adult salmon and its impacts on the species freshwater migration. In addition to reading the research, David also presented his research topic in class. Listening to David present enthusiastically about the subject and the drawing of connections between environmental stressors and aquatic migratory species allowed me, as a student, to understand the issues being discussed more comprehensively. The class discussions David hosted also allowed me and several students to draw comparisons from his research to contemporary fisheries and fish conservation issues. During these discussions, I was surprised at how David was able to provide both answers and additional insights to the questions he was asked. As a student who learns best by drawing connections of academic topics through modern issues, I was naturally drawn and engaged to the topic David was discussing.

Another merit of David as a TA I particularly value is his determination to create a buffer to help absorb constructive feedback and evaluate assignments. Oftentimes constructive feedback comes after high-stakes evaluations, which in my opinion, don't contribute positively to students' ability to improve and learn. David's advocacy for a low-stakes outline submission before a major 20-page essay was essential for students to learn about the professor's and TA's expectations, mainly since this paper was the only major assignment of the class. Through the process of the low-stakes outline, I received valuable feedback that allowed me to write more succinctly and concisely in an academic manner. Through David's help, I was able to do much better in that specific course and scientific writing in general for other courses.

What I perhaps admire most about David is not just his ability to excel as a teaching assistant but as a role model for undergraduate students like me. Nearing the end of the course, I had asked David for a short talk regarding his experiences as a graduate student, and he responded right away, and we hopped into a zoom call for nearly an hour. During this call, he talked about his experiences applying for graduate programs, from emailing professors to becoming a graduate student here at UBC. His expertise and advice as an international student were precious to me. He also talked about his professional career outside academia, offering me insights to broaden my career path. In addition, he also pointed me towards several helpful resources (of which he also participated) that helped give other students advice in pursuing a graduate degree. Through anecdotal experiences and insightful advice, I immensely appreciated his relentless commitment to empowering students during an unprecedented time of uncertainty for international students like me.

In sum, I highly recommend and nominate David Moulton for the Jordan L. Burke Memorial Award. I firmly believe David's leadership and action as a teaching assistant showcased his many strengths. His leadership skills and determination to advocate for students' learning make him well suited for the award.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

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