



Michigan Technological University

Graduate School

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September 15, 2013

To whom it may concern:

This is a letter of recommendation for Kevin Cassell who is currently completing his doctoral program in Rhetoric and Technical Communication at Michigan Technological University. I have known Kevin for approximately two years and I feel that I know him very well. After serving as a departmental representative and graduate student liaison to the University Senate from 2011-12, Kevin was elected President of the Graduate Student Government (GSG) for the 2012-2013 academic year. As Dean of the Graduate School and administrative advisor to GSG, we worked closely on several issues throughout the year.

Kevin possesses many outstanding qualities and of all the students I have known at his academic level (close to completing a PhD) he is by far the most self-motivated, responsible and mature student that I have known. It is clear to me that he understands the academic milieu extremely well. Kevin and I had to deal with several politically sensitive topics during his year as GSG President. Kevin worked very hard to bring diverse stakeholder groups together and to facilitate open communication. He helped his fellow graduate students prepare for meetings with the President and Provost of the University so that collegial discussions (rather than confrontations) resulted. As GSG President, Kevin was asked to make quarterly presentations to the University's governing board. His PowerPoint presentations represented graduate students' activities, concerns, and opinions in a direct but visually engaging (and often very entertaining) way. He did not shy away from conveying concerns about increased rental rates in graduate housing, students' desire for more flexible ways to satisfy the required RCR (Responsible Conduct of Research) training programs, and the concerns voiced by international graduate students regarding a proposed new international student surcharge.

As part of his work related to this last issue, Kevin played an instrumental role, for which he had my full support, in negotiating with the upper administration for a significant reduction of the cost of the surcharge. As a result of his efforts, the GSG is now viewed by the University's upper administration as an ally in spreading the word about pending changes on campus. He greatly enhanced campus-wide communication and outreach. One new method he employed was the use of YouTube videos in which he interviewed and was interviewed on topics such as parking fees, social events, and professional development. He also promoted the GSG softball league and Graduate Research Colloquium on the GSG's YouTube page, Facebook profile, and website. He encouraged graduate students to post concerns on the GSG blog (including one that had over 130 postings). He sent out regular GSG e-letters to graduate students informing them of tuition and fee changes, health care changes, planned policy modifications, along with information about searching for jobs and postdoctoral positions. His use of multiple methods for communication had a huge impact: GSG doubled the number of students presenting at the Graduate Research

Colloquium, tripled the number of graduate students submitting nominations for annual merit awards, and all of their most important events – the First Friday Social, the Graduate Student Picnic, the six Lunch-n-Learns, the Graduate Research Colloquium and Graduate Awards Banquet, not to mention the departmental meetings GSG Executive Board members and Representatives held with students from various departments – had record attendance levels for 2012-13. Many of his methods for communication have been institutionalized by GSG and I hope that this will continue to encourage students to participate in GSG. His e-letters and blog approach has also been picked up by other campus organizations, and the Library and Housing are following his lead in making informational videos.

Kevin also raised awareness among graduate students of resources available in the local community. He attempted to enhance entrepreneurial opportunities for graduate students by liaising with officials at Michigan's SmartZone business accelerator, the CEO of Superior Innovations, and the Global Talent and Retention Initiative of Michigan. As a result of these meetings, GSG arranged for several representatives from these organizations to meet interested graduate students at a well-attended Lunch n Learn in April 2013.

In summary, I recommend Kevin without reservation. I wish that there were a way to keep him here on our campus after he graduates but it is probably in his best interests to continue to broaden his horizons and take on some new challenges elsewhere. He is a wonderful colleague and I would welcome the opportunity to work with him in the future. I would be happy to answer any additional questions about Kevin at any time. My contact information is as shown on this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jacqueline E Huntoon".

Dr. Jacqueline E. Huntoon, Ph.D.
Associate Provost and Dean