

[PROFEESOR]

[TITLE]

[DEPARTMENT]

[ADRESS]

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**[DATE]**

**Dear Admissions Committee Members,**

It is a great pleasure to enthusiastically recommend [STUDENT] to your Ph.D. training program. [STUDENT] joined the [PROGRAM] in July 2016.  As you may know, [PROGRAM] is designed to provide under-represented minority and disadvantaged students in the biomedical sciences with a year long, mentored research experience at research-intensive universities across the nation.  [PROGRAM] also provides professional development, support to attend national scientific meetings, and mentoring throughout the graduate school application process.  Our goal is to improve the application credentials of these students in order for them to enter and achieve success in biomedical PhD programs. I am the current director of the [PROGRAM].  I meet routinely (a minimum of 1-2 h per week) with all of the [PROGRAM] scholars as a group and individually throughout the course of the program.  Although I have gotten to know [STUDENT] well for a relatively short period of time, my frequent interactions and discussions with him over these past 5 months have provided substantial insight into his potential for success in a rigorous Ph.D. training program.

[STUDENT] received a B.S. in Cell and Molecular Biology from the University of Puerto Rico, in May 2016 where he was involved in undergraduate research for more than 3 years. I first met [STUDENT] on a visit in October 2013 and then again in Nashville, at his ABRCMS poster presentation in November 2013.  I made it a point to attend his ABRCMS poster every year for 3 years and we also connected each of those years at my annual visits to PLACE. I was struck by his enthusiasm and drive to pursue a research career and I was impressed to see his growth and development as we discussed his individual research projects throughout the years. I was delighted to see his application to our [PROGRAM] because I truly believed that we could help him get to where he wanted to be. We selected [STUDENT] from over [NUMBER] of applicants to our [PROGRAM] based on his strong academic achievements at [UNIVERSITY], his enthusiasm for research, his strong sense of purpose in obtaining a Ph.D. degree, and my past interactions with him. Through our weekly [PROGRAM] meetings and constant informal discussions, I feel that I have come to know [STUDENT] better as a young scientist and human being. We have had numerous one-on-one discussions about research, labs, courses, careers, and life in general.  There is tremendous potential that resides in this young [WOMAN/MAN].  He is, without question, one of the most driven, passionate, but truly humble students that I have known in over [NUMBER] years of mentoring students as an independent academic research investigator and more recently, as a [PROGRAM] Director.  He is a leader in our group of new [PROGRAM] Scholars, participating at all levels in our [PROGRAM] meetings, discussions, and other activities.  He is well liked by his [PROGRAM] colleagues and by his laboratory; thus, speaking to his ability to work closely with others as a team member and as a good lab citizen.

[STUDENT] assimilated quickly into the laboratory research environment at [PROGRAM]. Working closely with [PROFESSOR], an international leader in cancer research, [STUDENT] has already produced data for a poster presentation at a national conference that investigates signaling in promoting the mesenchymal-cancer stem cell phenotype in pancreatic cancer. He is designing and conducting experiments, analyzing data, and interpreting his results in an independent fashion.  He meets with [PROFESSOR] frequently to discuss his ideas and results.  In a note from [PROFESSOR] in late September, he stated, *“I am more impressed with* [STUDENT] *than I have ever been with other [PROGRAM] students (and even some rotating students). He is very inquisitive, and works very hard to understand what can be a complex topic. I am happy to have him in the lab.”* Based on [STUDENT] research progress, his work ethic, and his drive to be successful, I am confident that [PROFESSOR] will provide additional feedback that will help with your admissions decision. I am impressed with [STUDENT] level of independence in a new laboratory environment and I am confident that he will continue to develop these important skills with time. [STUDENT] is an avid reader of the literature and has solid written and oral communication skills. His abstract to the 2016 ABRCMS conference in Tampa was well-written and his presentation of that poster was outstanding.  In my opinion, [STUDENT] is already functioning at the level of many of our second and third year PhD students at [PROGRAM]. I am most impressed by [STUDENT] scientific maturity and work ethic.  He works long hours in the lab, routinely attends seminars and journal clubs, and balances these efforts with graduate level coursework and intensive graduate program application activities. In my opinion, this speaks highly of his abilities to balance the demands of a Ph.D. degree program.

I think it is important to mention [STUDENT] academic background and credentials.  As mentioned above, I visit Puerto Rico each year as part of our diversity recruiting efforts. Private K-12 systems can provide select students with some tremendous advantages and they represent some of the strongest students from Puerto Rico that we eventually recruit.  However, [STUDENT] experienced the impoverished public school system where resources and advanced programs are limited, especially those in the STEM areas.  I believe [STUDENT] early education was sub-optimal and this produced difficulties for him when he encountered some advanced courses and more quantitative courses in a challenging curriculum at the top-rated STEM institution in Puerto Rico. He worked hard to “catch up” and to balance his academics with the many hours he spent in the lab gaining independent research experience.  I believe he found that balance, graduating from UPR with a 3.35 GPA and a couple of co-authored primary research articles.  He is currently taking a graduate level course in our [PROGRAM] and is performing extremely well.  Finally, his GRE scores absolutely do not reflect his potential for success in a biomedical PhD program.  In my opinion, they are more a reflection of his ability to take a timed, standardized exam in English when his native tongue is Spanish.  Even the quantitative portion of the GRE is more of an English comprehension exam than it is a math exam.  [STUDENT] is working hard to improve his English language skills.  His spoken English is strong and his writing skills are continuing to improve.  His English skills are as strong as any of our top international students and I do not believe that they will in any way impede his progress in academics, research, or any other areas of your Ph.D. program.

I believe [STUDENT] has all of the necessary drive, determination, ambition and foundational knowledge to be an excellent Ph.D. student at any top-tier research university in the nation. Based on my knowledge and experience with [STUDENT], I can state confidently that he will be invited to interview at [PROGRAM] and that he will be accepted to our [PROGRAM].  I think he would be a great addition to our PhD student pool and I know he will be successful.  I also feel that [STUDENT] will be a great addition to your program, if given the opportunity. He is poised to make significant contributions to your program and he has the drive, desire, and passion to be successful in this career path. You will not regret recruiting this talented young researcher to join your program.  I whole-heartedly recommend [STUDENT] with the highest level of enthusiasm and without reservation.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need additional information or if I may have inadvertently omitted something that is crucial to his review by your program.

Sincerely,

PI’s name