Application Related Information

Application:	Application Incomplete	Iteration Name:	202510_GR_G
Grad Program Applying To:	MES	Program Name:	MES

Recommendation Information

Recommended By:	Matthew Wolak	Recommenders Title:	Dr.
Recommenders Institution:	Auburn University	Contact Name:	Morgan Shelton
Waive Access to Recommendation Ltrs:	I choose to waive my right to review this recommendation.	Recommendation Waiver Choice:	
Recommendation Form Submitted:	✓	Recommendation Status:	Received
Received Date:	12/12/2023 11:47 AM	Recommender Assessment:	I recommend this applicant.
Recommendation Type:	General	Recommender Form:	Letter of Recommendation
Recommendation Entity ID:	1024000111463032	Recommendation Owner:	Josephine Bernier

Recommender Form Questions

How long have you known applicant:		Applicant ability as self-directed learner:	
Time since last contact with applicant:		Applicant as productive member of group:	
Relationship with Applicant:		Applicant most significant strengths:	
Ability to complete rigourous grad program:		Responsibility/reliability:	
Communication Skills - Oral:		Communication skills - written:	
Service Orientation-sensitivity/empathy:		Ability to work independently:	
Ability to handle stress:		Ability to think critically:	
Ability to analyze/problem solve:		Ability to think creatively:	
Openness to feedback:		Potential for leadership:	
Ability to work in a team:		Personal/professional reflection:	

Description Information

Description:		Form URL:	https://evergreenstatecollege.radiu

Other Information

Created Time:	10/13/2023 05:45 PM	Created By:	Josephine Bernier
Modified Time:	12/12/2023 11:47 AM	Modified By:	Josephine Bernier

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Dear Graduate Admissions Committee,

It is with great pleasure and enthusiasm that I provide a letter of recommendation for Morgan (McKenzie) Shelton in support of her application to The Evergreen State College Master of Environmental Science program. I have known McKenzie since January 2019 when she attended my BIOL 3060 (Principles of Ecology) course. Through our subsequent interactions, I have gotten to know McKenzie well such that I feel qualified to evaluate her ability to be an outstanding graduate student in your program. I also feel qualified to speak to her passionate desire to constantly improve her knowledge about the process of biological research, keen interest in environmental issues and conservation biology, as well as her personality that is inviting and at the same time exudes her very capable and confident nature. Further, McKenzie stands out among undergraduate students in terms of maturity, punctuality, organization, and ability to take initiative.

McKenzie is among the top 1% of students with which I have interacted at Auburn. I have come to that conclusion based on multiple ways by which to evaluate her and many one-on-one meetings. Firstly, I interacted with McKenzie throughout my Ecology course over the Spring semester of 2019. In addition to learning the conceptual framework surrounding ecological research, through this course McKenzie gained firsthand experience developing hypotheses, designing experiments, and conducting field research. Several of the laboratory exercises she completed are directly relevant to her planned graduate studies. Her excellent performance in the class (final grade of "A") reflects not only her intellectual grasp of the principles of ecology, but also factored in to the grade are her ability to perform scientific research projects throughout the laboratory periods, and her personal intellectual growth over the semester.

However, on top of successfully meeting the challenges of the normal Ecology course McKenzie took Ecology for honors credit. To justify the honors credit, McKenzie and I developed an extra component to the normal Ecology course that deepened her understanding of ecological principles. Indicative of her passion for environmentalism and conservation biology, McKenzie's entire face lit up when I suggested her honors work center around the topic of global change as it pertains to ecology. That semester, our department performed a job search for an Assistant Professor with research interests in global change biology focused on marine systems. Our on-campus interviewees, who are leading experts in the field, served as a structuring framework for us to investigate this field of research. McKenzie and I met weekly to discuss these scientists research talks and 2 scientific papers authored by each candidate.

As a final product for the honors credit, McKenzie wrote a very detailed and insightful review synthesizing the current state of research in global change biology of marine systems. Though focusing mostly on the research presented by our on-campus interviewees, McKenzie also supplemented these scientists research from the broader literature. Thus, she

demonstrated a very mature ability to find, digest, and apply in a different context the research from this entire field. Throughout our interactions, she was always prepared, organized, and thoughtful. I was ***continually impressed by her ability to think independently***. These abilities will serve her well when needing to identify the key messages from her own studies in graduate school.

I am also impressed that while at Auburn McKenzie sought out a position conducting research in Dr. Leisner's lab. Dr. Leisner was hired at AU after I arrived and was sought by our department to expand our expertise in a growing Global Change Biology cluster. McKenzie's placement in this research area, through her work in the Leisner lab, further demonstrates her commitment to this field.

My evaluation of McKenzie is that she has the potential to be a very successful scientist and, coupled with her passions for environmentalism, someone who will take the lessons from her Auburn and and graduate studies well beyond the confines of these institutions to become an exemplary alumnus of each. McKenzie's scientific preparation to date make me confident in her ability to successfully see her graduate degree to a highly successful completion. I believe that McKenzie's personality and preparation to date will aid her in translating her science into effective engagement with her community. ***I cannot recommend a candidate more highly for your program than with my support for McKenzie.***

Sincerely,

Matthew E. Wolak, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Department of Biological Sciences
Auburn University