March 1, 2022

To Hiring Committee,

This letter is written on behalf of Skylar Haskiell in support her application to the Biocomplexity Institute's Data Science for the Public Good (DSPG) Young Scholars summer program. Skylar is a 2nd year majoring in Computer Science and is also a member of our 3rd cohort Clark Scholars Program, where she is one of only fourteen students selected to join the four-year program in her year. I serve as the Faculty Director of the Clark Scholars Program and have had the opportunity to get to know Skylar well, as I selected her to join the program from amongst a pool of highly qualified incoming first year students. For additional context, the Clark Scholars Program is a 4-year program targeted towards students with demonstrated financial need with a mission of enhancing their core engineering training with experiences in business, service, leadership, and a global experience. These supplemental components represent the core pillars of the Clark Scholars Program and are targeted at preparing engineering leaders for the challenges of the 21st century. While these opportunities are intended to broaden the training and experiences of our Clark Scholars, these program pillar are requirements and require effort that extends above and beyond the core academic requirements of a typical UVA engineering student. As Faculty Director, I am responsible for selecting Scholars and implementing the program. Like many of our Scholars, Skylar has done well academically, maintaining a 3.36 GPA, while managing a program requirements and multiple extracurricular engagement activities within the University.

Within the Clark Scholars Program, Skylar has taken a rather active role as one of the leaders within the program and her Cohort. For some additional context, Skylar joined UVA and the Clark Scholars Program in the summer of 2020, which was at the height of COVID-19 constraints and as a result navigated a full year of virtual engagement. For the Clark Scholars Program, this included a 7-week summer intensive prior to the start of her first semester at UVA. In addition, classes and programmatic activities during the 2020-2021 academic year were essentially remote. Even in this capacity, Skylar managed to distinguish herself as a leader within the Clark Scholars Program as she engaged with Leadership Seminar speakers throughout the year. During the summer of 2021, Skylar was selected as one of our Resident Assistant for the incoming cohort (Cohort 4). In this role, she was very active in serving as a support member of our team and a facilitator for the incoming Scholars. Since this time, Skylar was selected by her cohort to serve as a member of the Clark Scholars Leadership Council, a further testament to the respect that she garners from her peers. Beyond her engagement with the Clark Scholars Program, where I know Skylar best, she is also active in School level activities such as engineering student council and a student associate at the Center for Diversity in Engineering. In both of these capacities, she serves as a champion and support system for her fellow engineering students.

While, Skylar is still pretty early in her academic career, especially considering the virtual onboarding experience she navigated, I believe that Skylar record indicates that she would be very successful in the Biocomplexity Institute's DSPG Program. Interestingly, in speaking to her about this opportunity she noted that one of the main reasons she switch majors from Biomedical Engineering, was her interest working with computational technologies for the betterment of people's lives and this opportunity aligns well with that interest. I also believe that she would be an excellent ambassador for the School of Engineering and the Clark Scholars Program. Therefore, I am glad to offer my full endorsement of her application for the DSPG Program. Should you have any questions regarding the submission, please contact me via e-mail (dharris@virginia.edu).

Sincerely,

Devin Harris, Ph.D.
Professor
Department of Engineering Systems and Environment
Faculty Director of Clark Scholars Program
University of Virginia