

1. Recommender's Name:

Text Response

Christopher Carrigan

Statistic

Value

Total Responses

1

2. Recommender's Email Address:

Text Response

ccarrigan@gwu.edu

Statistic

Value

Total Responses

1

3. Applicant's name for which you are providing a recommendation:

Text Response

Kazi Hassan

Statistic

Value

Total Responses

1

4. How long have you known the applicant and under what circumstances have you become familiar with the applicant's academic abilities?

Text Response

As a professor at the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration at George Washington University, one of the courses I teach is Research Methods and Applied Statistics to those pursuing either an MPA or an MPP at the school. As an MPA student, Kazi Hassan was enrolled last semester in one of the sections of the course that I co-taught with a Trachtenberg School colleague. Thus, I have had the opportunity to get to know him over approximately a five month period.

Statistic

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5. Please assess the applicant's ability to contribute to the Data Science for the Public Good Fellowship Program.

Text Response

I have no doubt that Kazi will make a significant positive impact as an intern in the Data Science for the Public Good (DSPG) fellowship program. Through my interactions with him in my Research Methods and Applied Statistics course last fall, I witnessed in Kazi a deep intellectual curiosity coupled with openness to constructive feedback, technical ability, and genuine passion for empirical analysis that I am confident will position him to flourish as an intern at the Social and Decision Analytics Laboratory at Virginia Tech. Because it serves as their first exposure to statistics in graduate school and combines two topics often taught as separate courses, Research Methods and Applied Statistics presents a stern test for most Trachtenberg School students. The class forces those enrolled to demonstrate their ability to connect difficult statistical concepts to real-world policy issues through weekly problem sets, a research paper analyzing a topic of their choosing, and a standard set of exams. For this reason, many students, particularly those with less exposure to these topics prior to enrolling, can struggle in the class. Given his background as a history and government major, Kazi fits the profile of the type of student that can have trouble in the course. While he was not alone in having some difficulty adjusting initially during the research methods portion taught by my colleague, Kazi nevertheless performed admirably in the statistics segment which I taught, earning a score which translated to a strong B+ and placed him very close to the cutoff for an A-. Kazi received a perfect score for the homework portion of his statistics grade and an A- for his research paper to go along with a B+ on the exam. Especially given his relatively limited exposure to statistics prior to coming to the Trachtenberg School, his performance was impressive. Kazi's deep understanding of the course material was very much evident in his class project. In a clever and well-written paper, he studied the connection between female representation in parliament and wealth among African nations. In addition to demonstrating a mastery of basic statistical methods such as multiple regression as well as an ability to accurately interpret his findings, what separated Kazi's work from many of his peers was his capacity to infuse context into the discussion and convey the analysis in an engaging manner. This skill is rare for a beginning student and typically only develops with more experience performing and reporting quantitative analysis. In addition to his solid performance on written assignments, Kazi was also a key contributor during class sessions. While he possesses an engaging but naturally quiet personality, Kazi nevertheless did not hesitate to ask well-considered questions when he was not clear. Moreover, he was quick to tackle almost any inquiry I posed to the class, even when he was still trying to make sense of the underlying idea himself. Although he was correct more often than not, even when he was not, Kazi was eager to learn, readily accepting my suggestions to build on his understanding of the associated statistical concepts. In fact, Kazi was one of the top two or three most consistent contributors in his specific section of 27 students. In fulfilling this role, Kazi made my job much easier by clarifying the course material for other students while allowing me to better assess student comprehension. Given his exemplary work ethic coupled with his openness to constructive feedback and enthusiasm for quantitative research, I have confidence Kazi will make an important contribution during his time at Virginia Tech's Social and Decision Analytics Laboratory. While a DSPG summer fellowship undoubtedly presents a wonderful opportunity for Kazi to pursue his goals, I am also certain the Laboratory will be pleased if it does offer him a position. As a result, I strongly endorse Kazi's application for an internship at the Social and Decision Analytics Laboratory this summer.

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6. How would you describe the applicant's motivation and initiative in pursuing his/her academic and career goals?

Text Response

Although I learned a substantial amount about Kazi through his written work and my interactions with him during class, in retrospect, I believe it was because of his visits to my office hours that I began to truly appreciate the depth of Kazi's conscientiousness and desire to learn. He is a committed and serious student, with a developing passion for quantitative analysis. On more than one occasion, he attended my office hours to clarify course concepts. In each case, it was clear Kazi had prepared in advance to ensure the conversation was productive. For example, when he came to discuss a conceptual problem he was having with the sampling distribution, he made sure to develop a list of questions and even proposed answers in advance. Moreover, many of his inquiries extended beyond the course material, underscoring his commitment and thirst for knowledge. Kazi was one of only a handful of students in my four sections to make it a priority to get started collecting data for his statistics paper early in the semester so he would position himself to perform a more comprehensive analysis. During our conversations about his project, we touched on a variety of topics including how to deal with missing data and outliers, interpret control variables, and convey analysis effectively to the reader. Importantly, he took my feedback seriously, making sensible revisions to his project as a result. What was most rewarding about these interactions was to see his interest in quantitative policy analysis develop. In fact, while typically a class reserved for MPP and PhD students, after taking Research Methods and Applied Statistics, Kazi decided to enroll in a more advanced econometrics course at the Trachtenberg School in an effort to further build on his quantitative analysis skills. Thus, although Kazi may still be determining his precise career plan, what is clearly evident in interacting with him is that these aspirations will include applying his zeal for empirical analysis to the study of policy. Knowing Kazi's work ethic, focus, and intellectual curiosity, I am convinced he will find a way to use his passion to cultivate what will undoubtedly be a productive career analyzing policy and leading public organizations.

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