To whom it may concern:

I am writing to provide my strongest endorsement of Dav Clark as a research fellow at this year’s Mind and Life Summer Research Institute. As I understand it, Dav has requested a letter from his advisor, Rich Ivry, speaking to his merits as a psychological researcher. Here, I will attempt to convey my experience of Dav as a committed and careful student of somatic practice.

I met Dav in 2002 (?), at a group vocal performance I was organizing at MIT (specifically, a pitch consensus exercise). He shortly sought instruction from me in vocal techniques. This was a bit of a challenge for me as a teacher, as Dav wasn’t necessarily working towards any specific performance goals, but was rather seeking a deeper understanding of the potentials and possibilities in vocal performance. While this was a bit of a challenge for me, we ultimately focused on exercises sourced from Roy Hart theatre and Fitzmaurice voice work. Since that time, I have gone on to complete XXX training with Catherine Fitzmaurice. Dav continued to work with me and my colleagues on various explorations of breath and voice. This included tools based on somatic experiencing, the use of various images and sourcing emotional material. As a dedicated supporter of this work, Dav even organized some of the workshops he attended.

Dav displayed an intense curiosity for experiential approaches to human development and well-being. In addition to his work with me, he was deeply enmeshed in the performative and visual arts. He also sampled other disciplines, as I saw with our shared interest in a relatively obscure branch of karate called Shintaido. After this period of exploration, Dav ultimately decided to train as a Feldenkrais practitioner in 2005. I suspect this is because this work comes from the mind of an Engineer. Ultimately, Dav has a deep appreciation for rigor and the contributions that science can make to one’s understanding of internal experience and behavior, and vice versa. I know that Dav has been an active member of his community, and that he finds deep satisfaction in his personal practice. From what I can gather, he is truly helpful for his students.

Most relevant to the purpose of your institute, Dav has assisted with the planning of this summer’s Feldenkrais conference in San Mateo, “Embodying Neuroscience: The Feldenkrais Method in Human Development, Performance and Health.” The purpose of this conference, much as with your own institute, is to bridge experiential approaches to personal development with a current understanding of modern neuroscience. He has assisted with the selection of speakers from the academic Neuroscience community and he was also invited to give a full day workshop bridging between embodied practice and Georg Streidter’s lecture on brain evolution and hierarchical control. This is no small achievement, and I believe he will be the youngest practitioner to be giving such a workshop. The interests that he shares with the Mind and Life institute are far from casual, and I believe his is already an active supporter of your core mission.

Recently, I joined Dav for a meditation retreat with Russell Delman at Esalen, and we were able to reconnect after some time apart on how our respective practices have developed. Dav retains a strong commitment to an empirical, objective approach that complements his own (and others’) first person explorations. Given the stated mission of the Summer Research Institute this year, I believe that Dav will provide a critical piece for integrating a cognitive viewpoint with embodied practice. In fact, it is my sincere hope that one day the two of us might collaborate on such inquiries of our own!