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Matthew R. Bowen

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Dear Ms. McBride, Ms. Kalita and Ms. Heron,

I am writing to recommend that you accept Megan Johnson to your Leadership Academy for Women in Digital Media; I believe Megan’s drive and background will improve the academy itself, and with your mentoring, the field of journalism after the program has finished.

I worked with Megan at U.S. News and World Report. At U.S. News, I was Director of Web Technology, which meant working with every vertical on the technical implementation of a project bound for [usnews.com](http://usnews.com/" \t "_blank). I worked closely with Megan on several projects and was in the unique position to assess her relation to her peers in other verticals. I had the opportunity to see Megan grow into a highly competent product manager (one of the best at the organization) who both understands and drives innovation at a digital news organization. She led key parts of some of U.S. News's best service and data journalism though her leadership in the Best Hospitals and Best Nursing Homes projects. More exciting to me though, she grasped the subtle business needs of the organization and led a totally new project — the U.S. News Data Dashboard — improving the organization's capability to produce (and profit from) all of its data products. This dashboard offers the institutions U.S. News evaluates, such as hospitals, a way to directly provide U.S. News data used in its rankings and directories, helping improve the accuracy of U.S. News's reporting, improve the relationship of U.S. News with the organizations it covers, and improve the rankings, directory and content products themselves by streamlining their production.

Megan’s work at U.S. News has given her unique familiarity with developing digital news products, and she has overseen every aspect of the life-cycle of such projects, from pitching editorial management and developing wireframes and specifications for the Data Dashboard to coordinating editorial deadlines, ticket triage, quality assurance and even video production for the Best Hospitals and Best Children’s Hospitals releases. These products are complex journalistic undertakings, with substantial research and analysis components, traditional stories, web applications to support reader-driven investigation, and data visualization — and Megan has overseen years of their launches. In the process, she has developed a sophisticated understanding of what goes into developing news products that are themselves breaking-news. And, her experience on the Data Dashboard gave her the opportunity to lead a product from pitch to production, learning all the tradeoffs and technical details required to get a major new tool onto the web and ensure it helps the organization, sources and the public.

With this background, she will bring a unique perspective to the academy that should enrich the experience of all students. This perspective, combined with the strong work ethic and drive that I saw in her project-after-project promises you an outstanding student who will contribute to the field for the rest of her career.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you might have about Megan that a reference might answer.

Sincerely,

Matthew Bowen

Senior Software Engineer, American Legacy Foundation

Former Director of Web Technology, U.S. News & World Report