



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

DEPARTMENT OF BIOLOGY

1210 Biology Psychology Building
College Park, Maryland 20742-4415
301-405-6887 TEL 301-314-9358 FAX

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2110 Marie Mount Hall
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742-5251

Dear Lisa Kiely,

I am writing to support the appeal of one of the students in my program, Michelle Jong 110584605, who was put on Academic Dismissal at the end of the fall 2012 semester. It is true that Michelle's cumulative GPA is below a 2.0 for another semester, but I do not think that that reflects the great improvement she has made recently.

Michelle started in the Biological Sciences Program at the Universities at Shady Grove this past fall after having a very rough start at main campus. She took 12 credits with us while also taking a 3 credit HA course at Montgomery College. Of her 15 credits of courses, 11 credits (three classes) were science classes, including two courses that have a lab component. Lab courses are always more time consuming than strictly lecture courses, even though generally only 1 more credit is added to the course. Despite this load, Michelle managed to receive two As and two Bs for a semester GPA of 3.458. Her highest semester GPA prior to this was a 1.600 and her cumulative GPA was a 1.470. That is quite a step up in just one semester.

I believe that you know that we are a cohort program out here at Shady Grove. We only offer each course once a year, and students have a set schedule of courses for the four semesters they are here. Missing out on the spring semester would make it very difficult for Michelle to fulfill all of the requirements for graduation in a timely manner. She has obviously found her comfort zone here in the smaller classes we offer, and missing this semester would mean she would have to commute to main campus, most likely taking summer and/or winter courses which are not covered by financial aid, in order to graduate on time.

Michelle has been excited about this program since she first came to talk to me about the possibility of transferring to us. She has been very involved and is a model student. She has actually founded a student group (a USG chapter of the Red Cross) which will be up and running next semester. Michelle herself admits she was not prepared for the intensity of coursework at a four year university when she first started on main campus. She has obviously figured out what works for her at this point. I know that the cutoff is a 2.0 cumulative GPA, but it seems such a shame that a student who has made such a drastic turnaround (which so many talk about but never achieve) would lose the momentum she has acquired because she is only 0.011 points off the required GPA.

I have had several other students go on Academic Dismissal since I became Director of this program, but I have never supported their appeal because it was obvious they needed the break from classes to regroup and decide how to proceed. But, I hope that you seriously consider allowing Michelle to continue on the spring 2013 semester. I am strongly convinced that she has found her way to succeed at the University, and I would hate to see her derailed after she has made such an improvement.

Thank you,

Dr. Beth A. Parent
Director, Biological Sciences Program
The Universities at Shady Grove
parent@umd.edu
301-738-6009