**STUDENT RECOMMENDATION LETTER**

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICS

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October 4, 2XXX

James R. Murray

Secretary of the Rhodes Committee Selection for Montana

Gordon Murray Tilden LLP

1001 Fourth Avenue

Suite 4000

Seattle, Washington 98154-1007

Re: Letter of Appraisal for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Dear Mr. Murray:

I write on behalf of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s application for a Rhodes Scholarship. I believe \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to be an exemplary student-scholar as well as a person of tremendous character with significant leadership skills.

I heard *of* \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ before I met her. A top student of mine and Truman finalist came into my office and announced that she had met the *next* Truman finalist—a first year woman who was full of energy for leading the Students for Choice organization. The young woman I encountered in my American Politics class that next semester was, in fact, quite enthusiastic for her studies and a solid, conscientious student. Full of questions, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ regularly participated in class discussions and probed the materials with a zest for learning. In her first year, however, I was more struck by her openness to the world than her analytic ability.

What happened over the next two years was rather astounding from my perspective and a lesson to me not to underestimate any student. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ still has a refreshing wide-eyed quality about her but she is now more fully self-possessed and has a command of analytic reasoning that places her in the top 1% of the students I have encountered here at Willamette. Her enthusiasm and energy have been matched over the years with a discipline that is remarkable in someone her age. This discipline is not about study habits, though I would note that she always seems to be ahead of schedule, turning in assignments early and working on projects weeks and months in advance. Her discipline is a commitment to learning.

As evidence of this discipline, I offer her engagement with me. While \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ did not receive the top grade in my American Politics class and generally felt that she did not perform terribly well, she continued to seek out my advice and feedback. Although she went on to stellar performances in other classes with other professors, she sought me out on policy questions, asked for summer reading recommendations and generally kept a running dialogue with me. In fact, as I have watched her progress over the last three years, I note with amazement her ability to handle criticism and to grow and learn from it. Where other students turn defensive, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ wades in absorbing other perspectives and viewpoints, debating ideas, adjusting her conclusions as necessary. She is undaunted but properly reflective, a rare combination that speaks volumes, I believe, about her abilities as a scholar and a leader. This past summer \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ engaged me in an email discussion about poverty and welfare issues, reading extensively on her own and asking me for more—more to read and more to think about.

This semester \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is enrolled in two of my courses. Topics in Public Policy examines several case studies including tax policy, environmental policies, education, and housing and asks students to evaluate different theories about the policy process based upon those cases. This is a difficult course because it requires that students grasp complex specifics; they must know why, for example, certain elements of the business community might push for accelerated depreciation schedules in tax policy and what is the cumulative effect of rule changes governing the amendment process. However, I also ask them to step back and to draw lessons from the specific case studies to say something about the nature of democratic decision-making. While many students tend to be good at one or the other, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ excels at both. She is well on her way to graduate level thinking and evaluation.

The other course in which she is enrolled is co-taught with three professors. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the Politics Department and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of the History Department and I conceived of a graduate style seminar where we are as much participants as instructors in an examination of Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*. This is a year-long course where we spend the first half reading and analyzing the text. The spring semester is devoted to bringing guest scholars in both history and political science, who are completing works on Tocqueville. These guests will serve as models of scholarship for our students and give our students more resources and expertise to pursue a final research project. We accepted applications for this course and only admitted fifteen of the best students from the two departments. Even with this formidable group of peers, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s work shines. In the first writing assignment, based upon the first 200 pages of the text, we asked the students to identify a central puzzle that animates *Democracy in America*. Most of the students wrote competent essays, but \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ really got to the heart of Tocqueville’s problem and concern for preserving liberty given the dangers of democracy and equality.

In sum, I highly recommend \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for the Rhodes Scholarship. I believe her proposed course of study is suitable and builds on her many strengths. Her animating spirit and disciplined approach to learning make her particularly well suited to take advantage of this opportunity.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Assistant Professor