

Dear Rachael,

This letter is on behalf of Melissa LaBonty, a worthy candidate for the Norman I. and Susan G. Krinsky Excellence in Basic Science Teaching Award. I am currently a research technician in Pamela Yelick's zebrafish research lab at Tufts University School of Dental Medicine. My goal in working alongside Melissa in this lab was to gain more practical experience in an animal research lab setting. I have already benefited greatly under Melissa's guidance. I have been able to aid her in conducting experiments, as well as witness proper presentation techniques for reporting experiments and results at a typical research lab meeting. She has also shared advice with me on how and where to job search within the sciences, and instilled a greater sense of motivation within me to further my career since earning my undergraduate degree in biology.

As my mentor, Melissa demonstrated the procedures she wanted carried out around the lab, then consistently allowed for hands-on learning. Between breeding zebrafish, collecting embryos, or anaesthetizing adult fish for microscopic observation, I have learned a great deal of essential methods to utilize around a research facility. She would also visually explain the function of any equipment or devices being used, leading to better, more detailed data collection and observation of results. The measures she takes could allow any student to eventually work independently around a laboratory with assurance, as well as carry those organizational skills with them into their own future in research science, or any career field for that matter.

Melissa taught me the materials necessary to understand the overall focus of the lab's research on zebrafish, as well as her own specific experiments, with ease. She was always prepared with PowerPoint presentations to provide mini-lectures on the history of relevant diseases, past discoveries in the field, and what she and her lab aimed to accomplish through new, innovative experiments. Always using a clear, articulate manner of speaking, Melissa would hold my attention and remain easy to follow when teaching. While explaining the process of a disease in a particular instance, the journey and function of every piece of the molecular puzzle became increasingly more complex. However, because she was an engaging lecturer, I was able to make a connection in the function of certain cells before she had even reached that point in the explanation. She allowed me to think ahead and truly understand the topic with confidence. Whenever there did happen to be any confusion in learning new topics, Melissa would always review what had been taught and explain difficult areas in a new manner. Being able to switch perspectives and teach something in more than one way allowed for a constructive and effective teaching style, something I hadn't always received throughout my education.

Melissa is the type of teacher I would be more than glad to see involved in the education system. She is prepared, extremely organized, and constantly attentive to detail. She has a great, positive outlook, always encouraging new and better solutions when results are inadequate. Overall, Melissa is a motivated *and* motivational teacher, something I find to be essential for a successful classroom setting. She has been an inspiration for myself to further my career in science and learn new concepts in life with confidence. It has been an honor and a pleasure to work for a scientist as kind and talented as Melissa, and I am certain that your consideration of her for this award would be a wonderful decision.

Sincerely,

Shaina Colon

Research Technician, Tufts University School of Dental Medicine