



Cornell University

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Letter of Professional Promise for Mr. Brendon Soltis

Brendon Soltis served in the role of Graduate Student Intern for the office of New Student Programs (NSP) at Cornell University from June 24, 2013 through August 28, 2013. In this role, Brendon completed 430 hours during his internship.

As his supervisor during that time, I wish to speak directly to his professional promise in the field of higher education/student affairs. In short, I feel Brendon's success in the field is assured. In comparison to other graduate students in similar stages of their career, Brendon's understanding of why this field is right for him succeeds every other graduate student I have worked with over my 10+ years in the field. In part this is because of Brendon's work experiences prior to entering a graduate program in higher education. Yet more importantly, it is because Brendon made his own self-development a priority before entering a graduate program. While many higher education professionals tend to stumble into this career or have someone tell them they'd be good at it, Brendon has really taken the time to understand why this career has meaning for him. With burnout in our field more common than I think we would all like, I have no doubt that Brendon is one of the few grads that has a genuine understanding of what success in this profession looks like and what he personally needs to do to accomplish it. Brendon has been so thoughtful to come to the decision to study higher education that the actual work in the field will be the easiest part of his transition.

This is in large part because of Brendon's thoughtfulness and maturity. In Brendon's role on Cornell's campus, he contributed greatly to the mission and short-term and long-term goals of the office. Brendon was responsible for our Transfer Student Orientation Program in August of 2013. This five day program welcomed close to 600 new undergraduate transfer students to campus. In addition to formulating a schedule for August Transfer Student Orientation, Brendon was responsible for training the close to 40 Orientation Leaders who served transfer Orientation Leaders throughout Orientation. Their training was robust, complex, and resulted in leaders with enhanced leadership capabilities, knowledge of campus resources, multi-cultural competency, and the ability to serve as a mentor to a small group of new students. In addition, Brendon did a

comprehensive review of a longitudinal transfer student assessment and created programming to meet the needs of transfer students during Orientation. These programs provided transfer students with resources and information that had been previously lacking from their Cornell experience.

It is often difficult to assess over a few phone interviews the actual success that a summer intern might have on campus. If Brendon had accomplished half of the items spelled out in the previous paragraph, I would have considered his summer a success for the office. He clearly accomplished much more than I envisioned. In part this is because Brendon almost always had spot-on instincts for deciding how to handle a situation. While he sometimes wanted assurance that he was on the right track, I quickly learned that this exercise, while helpful to his own growth and development, was unnecessary from an execution standpoint. I don't doubt that Brendon will quickly be able to take on responsibilities and decision making far above that of a typical new professional and probably beyond his job description. In fact, I supervise several professionals currently whose professional prowess does match Brendon's ability from over six months ago.

Brendon is already skilled in providing support, mentorship, and assistance to undergraduates. He has a great ability to meet students where they are in their development and to provide support in a non-overwhelming manner. In his work with colleagues, I think Brendon grew throughout the summer in finding his voice and confidence in sharing his opinions and taking on leadership opportunities.

There is no doubt in my mind that Brendon will make a significant contribution to the field of higher education and student affairs. I tremendously appreciate his calm demeanor and am glad that a fellow introvert feels that he can make a positive contribution to this field. Brendon's passion is apparent, as is his desire to put student's needs first. He is independent, organized, and has a maturity level far exceeding the vast majority of the individuals graduating from Higher Ed Master's programs currently. These intangibles and skills speak greatly to his promise in the field. I only wish him the very best.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah H. Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'S'.

Sarah H. Jones
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