

Drew Sparkman
M.A. Admissions, English Literature
University of Sheffield
Ms. Jane Lowe
August 31, 2016

Dear Ms. Lowe,

Recently, Mr. Drew Sparkman requested me to write a letter of recommendation in support of his candidacy for admission to the post-graduate, online program in English literature offered by the University of Sheffield. He has my highest recommendation. However, I must first ask you to excuse the form of this letter. Since I am currently away from the University, I do not have access to University stationery. I hope nevertheless that substance assumes priority over form.

Intelligent and responsible, mature and intellectually motivated, Mr. Drew Sparkman is, in my judgment, prepared to pursue the post-graduate program in English language and literature at the University of Sheffield. During Academic Year 2007-08 he elected my courses in second-year French (French 201 and French 202), in which I assessed his work as B+. Completing a rigorous major in French and a minor in anthropology, he elected to study for a semester in Martinique in 2009 where his work was first-rate. He returned to this country, speaking a very good French, and completing his coursework and senior exit examination in French with distinction. He was awarded his B.A. in French in 2009. On the basis of his linguistic attainments in French and cultural interests, the faculty in French did not hesitate to recommend him for a French Government Teaching Assistantship which afforded him the opportunity to assist in the teaching of English on the secondary level in Valence, France, for an academic year. Academically and linguistically, I would rank him among the upper 10% of the students whom I have known both here and elsewhere. Upon his return to the United States, he held various jobs in Colorado and, during the summer of 2011, consulted with me about the possibility of pursuing courses in the teaching of English as a foreign language. In fact, he had already taught on an adjunct basis courses in this area at the Colorado School of English in Denver. His interest in foreign cultures drew him to Eastern Europe; and, as you will note from his curriculum vitae, he has enjoyed very considerable success in teaching English and critical thinking and in administering courses in the international baccalaureate program at the SEK Budapest International School. He is prepared to undertake the rigors of a post-graduate program in English that, in turn, will serve him well in continuing his success in teaching English in Budapest. Finally, I have also enjoyed, and benefited from, numerous conversations with him outside the classroom.

Intellectually and culturally, Mr. Sparkman is fascinated with foreign cultures and civilizations and has found his place and role as a teacher-scholar. Initially, this intense interest in other cultures explains his decision to concentrate in anthropology; however, his interests in French and cultural anthropology prompted him to study for a term in

Martinique. Upon his return to America, he decided to major in French, with a minor in anthropology; and, in order to strengthen and refine his proficiency in the language and to enrich his appreciation of French culture and civilization, he served as a French Government teaching assistant in Valence. His use of French is secure, and I am confident that, after extensive residence in Budapest, his proficiency in the non-Indo-European language of Hungarian is sound. His success in teaching English to gifted students in Budapest attests to his instructional abilities, interaction among culturally diverse students and faculty, and adaptation to challenging situations. Emotionally and intellectually, he is prepared for post-graduate studies.

Mature and emotionally balanced, linguistically capable and intellectually serious, he has thought deliberately and honestly about his decision to undertake this graduate program. He knows his strengths and weaknesses, appreciates his interests, and has reflected on the benefits of such a degree in his professional career. Although his undergraduate preparation did not include substantial study in English, he has overcome this deficiency. His success in teaching English language and literature in Budapest testifies to his understanding of the requirements, discipline to prepare, and appreciation of rigorous standards that are expected of faculty to prepare secondary students to highly selective universities in Europe and America. Further, Mr. Sparkman enjoys the exhilaration of learning, publishing two articles in *The International Educator* and *Uisio*, in presenting his thoughts in recorded interviews, and in advising numerous students in capstone research projects.

Mr. Sparkman is undoubtedly prepared to adapt to the emotional strains of such a program. Appreciating differences in personality and background, he has demonstrated, in my judgment, an acute and significant social sensitivity. He observes but does not judge perspectives proposed by his colleagues, and he enjoys and interacts easily and readily with persons of divergent backgrounds and ideas. He works very well both independently and collaboratively. Such qualities are essential for success in traditionally taught courses, online programs that include blogs and discussions, and “hybrid” courses. He also appears to me comfortable and competent with the technology required of online courses. Finally, he recognizes the importance of this program. Since his teaching duties require residence in Budapest, the online post-graduate program at Sheffield is perhaps the most sensible approach for him to continue to develop as a teacher-scholar. He will not squander this opportunity and, in fact, deserves our support and encouragement.

Responsible and respectful, highly motivated and intellectually prepared, Mr. Sparkman is, I believe, a first-rate candidate for admission to the post-graduate program in English literature at the University of Sheffield. By every measure, he has demonstrated the energy and resolve, emotional stability, and intellectual acumen to meet

the challenges of this program. I am therefore pleased to endorse his candidacy for admission to this online post-graduate program, with confidence in his capabilities, and with enthusiasm for his promise of success.

Yours sincerely,

Donald Gilman
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