

5 June 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

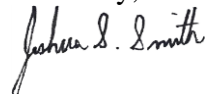
I write to you in recommendation of Payton Ferris to your program. Payton was a student in my American literature class during her junior year (2017–18), and I believe that her personal character and extracurricular achievements would translate quite well into a college environment.

Payton's transcripts may show that she is not academically stellar, but she has never once appeared to be discouraged by a grade. Though she plans to go into screenwriting and to major in English, she does not hold blindly to this identity: she is mature enough to not only take criticism of her writing, but to be grateful for it. Indeed, for the holidays and the end of school this year, she wrote me lengthy letters in which she thanked me for honestly appraising her work, a gesture whose very form demonstrates her thoughtfulness and whose content speaks to her desire for improvement and her ability to view her work objectively.

Payton transferred to Ellis in her ninth-grade year from a public school. This was, in large part, due to several boys at her previous school who actively attempted (and, it seems, often succeeded) to distract their teachers and disrupt the class. Payton chose Ellis precisely because it is an all-girls school—and it would academically challenge a young woman who loves to learn. Classes, however, do not fill Payton's world: she also plays the trombone in the school orchestra, plays field hockey and lacrosse, is active in her youth group, and routinely acts in theater. This spring, she played Velma Kelly in our school's production of *Chicago*—and did it without asking for an extension, for praise or recognition, or for any special consideration of the hours she poured into her star turn.

Last year was my first at the Ellis School, and while I came to know the junior class and the handful of first-year students in my charge, all of the other students remained nameless to me—with the sole exception of Payton, who introduced herself to a new teacher out of the blue. Payton is an outgoing, exceptionally friendly student who eagerly anticipates the independence and challenge of a college education. As someone who taught undergraduates for nearly a decade, I can say without hesitation that I would have been thrilled to have her in my classroom, as I was this year. As wonderful as she is to work with now, she will truly come into her own in a college setting, and so I warmly recommend Payton Ferris to your program.

Sincerely,



Dr. Joshua S. Smith