

Fulbright Recommendation for Mary Smith

I have known Mary Smith well since the spring of her first year at Williams College. I have taught her in two courses, advised her on academic matters, and worked closely with her in my capacity as chair of the English Department (where she has one of her two majors). She is a person of remarkable personal and intellectual talents, and I strongly recommend her for a Fulbright Fellowship.

Mary is among the most distinguished members of the senior class at Williams. On the Dean's List every term, she has an excellent academic record in a variety of ambitious, demanding courses. The distinction of her work in the English Department earned her appointment this year to our Class of 1960 Scholars Program--a small group of our best majors who meet for special seminars with visiting critics and writers. She serves as a teaching assistant in the Religion Department, and this spring she will teach a course of her own design on "Rhetoric and the Essay." Mary is also the student coordinator of the College's "Writing Workshop," a program in which she has tutored for several years. Her appointments to all these positions (and others I will mention below) clearly indicate the exceptionally high regard in which she is held by the Williams faculty.

I taught Mary in two advanced-level courses last year: "Nabokov and Pynchon" and "Samuel Johnson and the Literary Tradition." Her work in both was outstanding. In her essays she chose to take on the most complex and demanding topics (e.g., the connection between the "general" and the "particular" in Johnson's system of thinking, and the relation of both to "nature"), and she handled them with exceptional critical sophistication and maturity. Her essays were lucidly and precisely argued, richly supported by cogently deployed evidence, carefully structured, and written in a graceful, lively style. I greatly admired the freshness and originality of Mary's ideas. Her written work demonstrated that she has developed, to a high degree, a refined aesthetic sensibility, the ability to make complex discriminations (of argument and value), and an unusual gift for synthesizing and explaining difficult ideas.

I was equally impressed by Mary's distinguished performance in classroom discussions. Her precisely formulated contributions would invariably elevate the argument to higher levels. She listened carefully and attended thoughtfully to the views of others, and had an instinctive knack for knowing exactly when and how to contribute to discussions.

In all of her academic work, Mary has shown herself to be a rigorous and intellectually courageous thinker, with a keen eye for significant detail and a subtle understanding of whatever issue she studies. She is superbly equipped to take the best possible advantage of the academic opportunities a Fulbright Fellowship would provide. Her strong preparation in the religion, literary criticism, and philosophy, along with her vibrant sense of intellectual independence and initiative, will allow her to pursue with distinction the course of study she has proposed.

Mary has been a remarkable leader in our College and local communities; her record of contributions is among the most impressive I have seen in my nineteen years at Williams. Mary inspires trust. Her judgment and integrity are deeply valued by her fellow students and teachers, who have repeatedly asked her to take on sensitive duties at Williams. In the English Department, for example, she has twice been appointed by the faculty to serve on our Majors Committee (a

small group of students who work with the faculty on various departmental issues). She has also served, during junior and senior years, on the department's Curriculum Committee and on our committee to select new faculty. Mary has handled all these responsibilities superbly. I am greatly impressed by the steadiness of her judgment, her thoughtfulness and discernment, and her ambitiousness in imagining new ways to organize and conduct the department's affairs.

Mary has also helped lead the effort to create at Williams a peer academic advising program--which matches trained advisors in the senior class with interested underclassman. She now coordinates that program, and serves as a peer advisor in both English and Religion. She has participated in--and led--several musical and theatrical groups on campus. She has also shared her multiple talents with students in our local elementary school, where she has been a volunteer writing teacher and organizer of musical groups.

As will be evident from all these accomplishments, Mary is a truly gifted leader, with a deep and abiding concern for the welfare of people in the communities around her. Whatever work she undertakes, academic or extracurricular, Mary goes about it with a wonderful combination of high discipline and easy grace. Though she sets the highest standards for herself, she doesn't agonize over her work; she gets it done--efficiently, thoroughly, and on time, all the while communicating a sense of joy rather than difficulty.

Finally, Mary is a splendid person--witty, modest, and ethically mature. She is entirely reliable and trustworthy. Her great personal warmth and deeply considerate nature have made her a beloved figure to her wide and loyal circle of friends. She works easily and well with people of all ages and backgrounds. I believe that Mary's personal and intellectual talents will make her an outstanding representative of our country abroad. I recommend her for a Fulbright Fellowship with the greatest confidence and enthusiasm.

Sincerely yours,