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# The Union Institute

27 October 1998

Office of Career Services  
College of Education  
1945 N. High St.  
Columbus, Ohio 43210-1172

To whom it may concern,

It is with great enthusiasm that I write this letter of reference for **William Keith Bookwalter**. I was Dr. Bookwalter's major advisor for his doctoral studies with the Union Institute. My work with him was both a source of inspiration for his intelligent and pervasive commitment to the education of young people as well as an opportunity to learn through the creative and apt connections he made among various practical and scholarly discourses. All of his doctoral studies, as exemplified in the strongly researched and highly interdisciplinary papers he wrote to demonstrate his learning, show clearly how dedicated, original and pragmatic his curriculum became under his guiding spirit. Finally, the dissertation which culminated his program is a powerful study that focuses closely on identified developmental tasks in children. Hence, we see here the ability to cast the net broadly for new growth in learning, combined with the ability to integrate ideas and focus neatly on particular problematics.

In addition to intellectual curiosity and depth of understanding, Keith displays personal qualities that make him such a remarkably engaging colleague. He breathes kindness and consideration for all his fellow humans; it informs all his interactions, even in potentially hostile situations. He is sensitive to others' needs and personal locations, whether they be children, peers, supervisors, family. This innate sensitivity does not seem to inhibit his ability to function successfully as a teacher or administrator; it, instead, seems to lead to his being an authentic "reflective practitioner," one who is conscious of the dynamics that go on around and within him, who acts equitably and with equanimity, and who then reflects on and learns from what has happened. Future action is gauged through the lens of experience, consciously reflected upon. I can think of no better combination than an educator who puts his considerable intelligence to work in a conscious way toward constructing fruitful learning environments, both human and material.

As a doctoral student, Keith was in charge of developing a curriculum that reflected his ~~many interests, that expanded, challenged, and deepened his existing concepts~~ and, more important, his framing paradigms. He was eager for feedback, questions, different opinions about his work; he took advice and criticism gracefully, reflected on the suggestions, and always made determinations that supported his growth and kept his focus intact. In the process, he studied in depth several areas of new learning, e.g., consciousness studies, child development, leadership theory, and evolved well prepared to engage in dialog with "experts" in these fields.

As the Chair of his doctoral committee, Keith kept communication flowing among members who were literally in different parts of the world. This ability to manage information and keep the channels of communication open is vital to any administrative position that he may be seeking. All the committee members were impressed by the high standards that Keith imposed initially on himself and on his ability to elicit and utilize response from the doctoral "specialists."

I, obviously, regard Keith highly. I perceived no flaw that I can think of in his abilities or commitment, though, human like us all, I'm sure they are there. I detected none during our several years of close communication. I only grew to respect and like him more and more with each interaction. I hope that the institution he now seeks to join will have the opportunity to come to know Keith as I have and to develop new understandings and ideas alongside and in conversation with him.

If there is any further information you wish, please be in contact with me.

Sincerely,

Mary T. Sheerin, Ed.D.,  
Core Professor,  
The Union Institute.