

October 7, 2017

Dear Faculty Selection Committee,

I am writing to support Mr. J. Blake Johnson. I have known Mr. Johnson for the past 10 years, and I have been able to work with him in many different capacities. I highly recommend him to you.

As a professor, Mr. Johnson is the kind of teacher that every student wants to have in the classroom. His classes are well-planned, and he is very engaging with his students, in a way that helps them stay motivated to do well. He is also easy-going and approachable, and his students know that he is there to help and support them. His students respect his experience and expertise, as he can show them examples of graphic design projects that he has done in the past, as well as his current projects.

One of Mr. Johnson's strongest attributes is his service to others. He has always been a great example of serving others, both with his expertise and with his own time and efforts. He has served the university well by accepting additional assignments, serving on committees, and taking initiatives that make improvements. He has been very active in service opportunities on campus, as well as in the community. Service is a large part of his character, not just something he does on occasion. This past year, he was awarded the SVSU Faculty Association Award for Service to recognize his accomplishments in this area.

For several years, he has worked hard to develop a program called Cardinal Solutions. This program allows students to work in interprofessional teams to develop solutions for community businesses and organizations. These teams include students from graphic design, technical writing, business, health sciences, and education, with a student serving as the project manager. Together, they work directly with clients that range from small businesses to non-profit organizations and government agencies, and they deliver high-quality solutions for them. To date, Cardinal Solutions teams have developed a math textbook for a local middle school, websites and apps for many different groups, grant applications, brochures and branding/marketing materials. Their services are so much in demand that they currently have a 2+ year waiting list, and many of their clients come back for more.

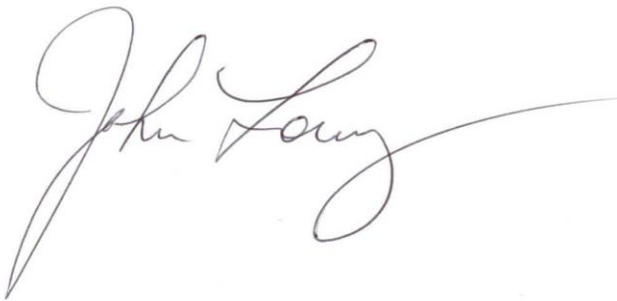
Understanding Cardinal Solutions will help you to understand how Mr. Johnson works as a professor. It has taken a long time to develop this program, and he has had minimal resources to help in the process. However, his motivation for Cardinal Solutions is the extraordinary learning experience that it gives to students, and also the impact that these solutions can have on our local community. Through Cardinal Solutions, Mr. Johnson has

created a way to deliver high-impact education to dozens of students, and harnessed the collective resources of the university to accomplish our mission of making an impact in our region. This program has been recognized as a Program of Distinction at SVSU, and Mr. Johnson has been invited to present about it at the Lilly Conference on Evidence Based Teaching & Learning.

I have had the privilege of serving with Mr. Johnson in many capacities outside of the university. He and I have worked together in many endeavors through our respective church callings. As assistant ward mission leader, he brought a strong aspect of community engagement and service to our efforts. We have also served together in a bishopric, and in stake callings. In all of these, I have seen him act as a servant-leader, humbly serving those around him to the best of his abilities. He is dependable and reliable, and is always willing to help in any capacity.

Again, I highly recommend Mr. J. Blake Johnson to you for consideration. I know he would be a good addition to your faculty, and he will have a positive impact on all who work with him. Please feel free to contact me about this recommendation, if needed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "John Lowry". The signature is written in black ink and has a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the name.

John E. Lowry, Ph.D.  
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8 October 17

Subject: Reference letter in support of Mr. Blake Johnson

To the Faculty Selection Committee:

I am pleased to write a letter of support for my friend and colleague Mr. Blake Johnson, though to be perfectly frank, I am hesitant to do so for two reasons. First of all, it is a tremendous challenge to adequately express the positive impact Mr. Johnson has on our department, our institution, our community, and our students. I am fearful that I will inadequately represent him and fall short of providing him with the kind of letter he deserves. Secondly, and paradoxically, if I am able to render a realistic representation of Mr. Johnson's worth you are likely to offer him the position to which he has inquired, resulting in our loss. In light of my internal conflict and insecurity I will do my utmost to give you an accurate depiction of Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Johnson is an effective, energetic and self-motivated problem solver whose ambition and accomplishments are fueled solely by his sincere desire to serve others, and serve them well. While demonstrable in every sphere of his practice it is perhaps most clearly evident in the many ways he prepares students to be productive and morally responsible artists and designers. Blake takes a holistic and practical approach to preparing his students. He understands that students and their families have the clear expectation that a course of study in graphic design should yield actual job opportunities. He carefully engineers his classes and interactions to support that goal. He ensures that his students not only have a broad range of knowledge and the skills necessary for success in any number of pursuits but that they also have the ability to effectively present themselves and work well with others. In observing his classes, I am impressed not only by the high quality of student solutions but even more so their ability to convince others that their solutions are, in fact, good. This skill is uncommon and the result of his focused instruction. His students become even more poised and prepared when they work in multidisciplinary situations for which he provides the interactive framework. In these environments he builds leadership and accountability skills that result in real world solutions for real clients. Most impressively, the lion's share of clients that Blake selects for his student groups are organizations and individuals who are deeply invested in supporting the public good. In doing so Mr. Johnson models good citizenry and compassion and supplies much needed attention to important projects. Blake's multidisciplinary approach is exceptional and worth continued discussion. It is common for universities, departments, professors, and administrators alike to speak of the importance of breaking down academic silos and leveraging the potential inherent in a liberal arts education. While many speak of multidisciplinary collaboration very few can actually achieve it. Mr. Johnson provides his students with a unique preview of real life situations by collaborating with departments from all across campus. Student understanding grows rapidly as the result of being able to interact and problem solve with and for a variety of individuals with widely ranging expertise and perspectives. These real

world experiences and skills result in exceptional job placement rates for our graduates and are evidence of Mr. Johnson's satisfying the expectations of our students and their parents.

Finally, Blake Johnson is an excellent colleague. He is supportive and positive to any initiative that demonstrates the clear potential to serve our students, department, university, and community. He is a risk-taker who is not afraid to take immediate steps to improve a situation regardless of where the idea came from. He is fun, playful and curious, never having lost the ability to think nimbly and creatively. Most importantly he is a kind person with a pleasant demeanor and a joy to work with. These are a few of the reasons that I offer my highest recommendation of Mr. Blake Johnson for your consideration. Please feel free to inquire regarding this recommendation at any time should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Phillip Hanson  
Lecturer of Art  
Saginaw Valley State University

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