

The following is an example of what a “jumbo” letter of recommendation might look like.



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February 9, 2007

Dr. Julia Carpenter  
Chair of Recruitment Committee  
Department of Science  
Universal University  
Hope, Arkansas 54321

Dear Dr. Carpenter:

I am writing to strongly recommend **Dr. Ann Anderson** for a position as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Science at Universal University. Anne was a graduate student in my research group for 4 years, from 1997 to 2001, and we have stayed in close touch during her subsequent postdoctoral work with Dr. Naim Mustaf.

Ann was in the top 1% of all the graduate students I have seen in my 34 years as a faculty member; indeed, of the 18 students I have personally supervised, she was one of the two best. I would compare her favorably to my former student Bill Roberts, who now holds an endowed chair at Constant College. Among more junior faculty members in her field, I would say she is at least as good as Susan Samuels, Ted Thompson, and Roger Roberts. Let me comment on several of the reasons that I hold Ann in such high esteem.

First, Ann is extremely bright and creative. In this regard several specific qualities come to mind. She has a wonderful eye for selecting the right study from among the many that are possible. She does not let herself get distracted by less important observations that occur along the way. And she knows when to stop and write up her work for publication – not too soon, and not too late. During her graduate work, Ann made many important discoveries. These have been presented at both national and international meetings and have been published in highly prestigious scientific journals. These include the observation that [...]. She was also the first to show that [...].

Second, Ann is very highly motivated to succeed. Although she does aim to lead a balanced life (e.g., taking music seriously and doing some tutoring for disadvantaged high school students), she works long hours and is almost always in the lab for at least part of each weekend. Indeed, I would say it is an unusual week in which she does not spend at least 70 hours in our research area collecting and analyzing data or at home reading relevant papers and writing manuscripts. She also understands the importance of going to the right meetings, publishing in the right journals, and getting to know the right people.

Third, Ann is a wonderful member of a research community. She was always ready to help others in my group (though she did not use this to avoid doing her own work as I have seen some do!). And she did more than help – she showed the makings of a great teacher and supervisor. Indeed, I have seen her instruct college students, graduate students, and even postdocs and other faculty members. She is patient yet demanding. And having had her give a few lectures in my undergraduate courses, I also know that she is excellent at this, too, as you will discover if she is invited to give a seminar. She also was often the person who ordered material that was about to run out, making sure that common areas were kept clean, and other sorts of things that all too often are not done and cause friction within a research group.

Finally, I should add that Anne is extremely personable. She got along with everyone, from the most junior lab aid to the department chair. Always a smile and a good word, never the sort of doom and gloom that one all too often encounters in a student struggling to finish their thesis and move on.

As I noted at the outset I have remained in touch with Anne since she received her PhD. I have seen her at professional meetings, and she contacts me from time to time, even alerting me to important papers that I might otherwise have missed. I also have spoken several times to Dr. Mustaf, and am pleased – though hardly surprised – to have learned that the qualities Ann exhibited as a graduate student have continued to be manifest in her postdoctoral work.

If I could find a way to create a proper position for Ann here at Euphoria I would do so in a minute. Indeed, I have approached people here about creating such a position. However, it would be a while before that could happen. Moreover, it is probably best for Ann to initiate her faculty career at a new institution. And among such institutions, I believe that Universal University would be a wonderful choice given its commitment to [her area of research]. In fact, the position Ann has described sounds like it was made for her, allowing her to start her own group in her area of interest and expertise, and in an institution with great depth in her areas of interest. I recommend her without the slightest reservation and with the greatest enthusiasm. I assure you that within the next few years Ann will become a leader in her field and a prized member of your faculty.

In order to speed this note to you, I am sending it by email and will follow up today with a hard copy for your files. Please feel free to contact me if there is any further information that I might provide.

Sincerely,

*I.M.A. Professor*

I. M. A. Professor, Ph.D.

Co-director, Center of Excellence