

To whom it may concern:

My name is Matthew Ramsey and I am an associate professor at the University of Louisville, School of Dentistry. I am writing to give my highest possible recommendation for Dr. Dasith (Das) Perera. Das obtained his PhD in my laboratory when we were both at the University of Rhode Island (URI). Das was my 1<sup>st</sup> PhD student to graduate, and to date has still been the best graduate student I have had the privilege to mentor. It is no exaggeration that the success of my laboratory, our funding, and my tenure and promotion, were in no small part due to Das's work and his influence on the other graduate and undergraduate students in the lab.

Das has had considerable wetlab experience and has transitioned that well into computational work during his training. Das came to the lab with some experience in bacterial genetics and during his time extended that into the use of new genetic tools and methods, most of which were not yet proven in our organism of interest. Das also learned how to do basic microbiome sample collection, preparation and 16S analyses through two different pipelines in my lab which had no prior experience with these methods. These are evidenced in his two 1<sup>st</sup> authored publications from my lab. Das has also spent considerable time with me on manuscript preparation, and has a strong writing background making manuscript and figure development quite easy compared to some of his other peers. Also notable was that the undergraduate researchers that published with Das were his direct trainees. The quality and quantity of work done by Das's assigned undergraduates was greater than that of his peers. This was entirely due to Das's extensive time spent training and working with them, as I typically let my graduate trainees directly mentor individual undergraduates as part of their own learning experience. All of these students held a high opinion of Das and speak fondly of working with him.

Das joined my lab at the beginning, and spent a lot of time getting projects off the ground, a new lab up to speed and working and was then waylaid by COVID shutdowns as well as dealing with major health issues which all were huge strains on his mental and physical health. Despite this, Das never faltered in the lab in regards to his productivity, nor his demeanor towards myself or his peers. Das is not a person to make excuses and his incredible positivity, humor and optimism was outstanding in the lab and served to elevate his peers around them by leading as a strong positive example.

Das was the type of student to be in my office every morning, asking me about a paper he just read, or wanting to discuss an experimental idea he had the night before. He was constantly thinking about the work, and loved to discuss how things might proceed forward in ways that I had not always considered. I greatly enjoyed this experience with him, and I have found few trainees at any point during my career, that have matched his tenacity and his excitement for the work. I also greatly enjoyed his sense of humor and his reliably kind nature towards his peers and trainees.

In summary, Das is the best trainee I have mentored so far in 9 years as a PI. He always put in the work, and gave his best efforts and made no excuses for things that obviously should have been a burden on him in and out of the lab. He was eager to learn new methodologies, and was excellent at mentoring new trainees around him while doing so. I never had to worry about his professionalism, attitude or work ethic, and I never will. I hope that you give him a chance for this position and that you get to enjoy working with him as I have. He is greatly missed here and I think that his only lack of any further accomplishments as a graduate student were due to my naivety as a new PI at the time. Thank you for your consideration and please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Ramsey', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Matthew Ramsey  
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