

Gilbert Brown
3604 Whispering Lane
Falls Church, VA 22041

February 2, 2023

Harry Truman Scholarship Foundation
712 Jackson Place, NW
Washington, DC 20006

RE: Jason Hess

Dear Selection Committee:

This letter is in very strong support of Jason Hess's Truman Scholarship application. I came to know Mr. Hess as a Washington Internship for Students of Engineering (WISE) Intern (<https://wise-intern.org/>) last summer. I served as the Faculty Member in Residence (FMR) for the 9-week D.C. program. This was my fourth summer as FMR, the first being in 1988. I have mentored over 50 students and found Jason to be one of the most highly motivated, ambitious, proactive, and hardest working of them all.

The cohort of WISE interns operate on two levels: **individually**, where each intern is responsible for producing a detailed policy paper and a succinct oral briefing on a specific technological policy issue pertinent to their sponsoring technical society; and, as **a group**, which attends various seminars and meetings that give an overview of how to perform technological research and an overall sense of how technological policy is shaped in the U.S. The group meetings are not necessarily in the specific area of interest to each intern, but they are intended to identify the interconnectedness of any specific topic and introduce the interns to the importance of the "inter-agency" process in developing sound policy and to the Library of Congress as an important source for their research. In addition, the group functions socially and organizes outings to museums, parks, concerts, etc. throughout their shared WISE experience.

Mr. Hess was a rising junior, and academically the youngest member of this year's group; the other six members were rising seniors or recent B.S. graduates who were going to attend graduate school. Any concern about Mr. Hess' academic or social maturity was quickly dispelled. He was fully engaged at each of the group meetings. He asked pertinent questions and was eager to garner connections that would help him progress on his individual project. He was appropriately aggressive in making appointments with key individuals at relevant governmental agencies and other organizations in D.C.

Several times during the summer there were group meetings where the interns presented progress reports on their work. It was clear that Mr. Hess was setting a benchmark for the group in terms of the breadth of research that he was performing and that would underpin a robust policy paper. At these meetings the interns explained their work to each other and responded to clarifying questions and heard other suggestions from their peers. Mr. Hess was an excellent participant and contributor at these sessions.

Particularly noteworthy was his ability to process the suggestions made to him. This was especially evident towards the end of the program when the interns had finished their research papers and were presenting, in essence, a dry run of their final oral presentation. Mr. Hess' presentation was too long and detailed as it tried to cover much of the technical material in his paper. But, to his credit, he was not defensive or dismissive. Rather, he demonstrated a keen ability to absorb the many critical comments and positive suggestions and wound up delivering an excellent final presentation that highlighted the key policy issues and associated policy recommendations.

He excelled not only in the technical aspects of the program, but in taking full advantage of the broader goals of the program by taking advantage of being in DC and proximate to the myriad of cultural opportunities, many of which turned out to be group activities.

Rather than produce more words of my own about the merits of Mr. Hess becoming a Truman Scholar, I would like to use his own words that come from an email he sent to me when he asked me to write this letter. It speaks eloquently as to why I believe he would be a worthy recipient of this distinguished award.

*.... I truly believe this [WISE] experience changed the trajectory of my life and showed me I can have a broad impact while conquering challenges that may be technologically impossible.
... Not only in an engineering sense did this summer change my life but it also changed my perspective on the world. Having the opportunity to meet people from all [over] the world in the city, visiting the African American history museum, and remembering lives that were lost at the Holocaust memorial unlocked a deep passion of mine to help people that I don't even know.
... While I don't know what my future holds whether in the halls of congress, the state department, NASA, the White House, or even running for state or federal office ... I will continue to shape my outlook of the world and drive [myself] to do all that I can to help our nation and the world be a better place than we left it.*

In summary, I believe the WISE experience, in which Mr. Hess excelled, is a perfect precursor to the Truman Scholarship program. Mr. Hess demonstrated convincingly a superior work ethic, an appealing personality, and an eagerness to "make the world a better place" through good public policy. He will be a most admirable Truman Scholarship recipient.

Sincerely,



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