BUTLER UNIVERSITY

Department of Mathematics and Actuarial Science

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Secondary Education Hiring Institution
Student Education Portfolio

Recommendation letter for Rachel Wraley

Dear Selection Officers,

I write enthusiastically on behalf of Rachel Wraley, an extraordinarily bright mathematics student I have had the pleasure of teaching at Butler University. Rachel is applying for your position teaching mathematics in secondary education. I have had the pleasure of knowing her for four years, teaching her quite sophisticated mathematics courses in MA 200 *Advanced Mathematics*, and MA 326 *Real Analysis I*. These courses are extremely important in developing our majors' abilities to understand the deductive theoretical nature of mathematics and (especially in the latter course) their work with and understanding of functions. My sense is that the *Real Analysis* course may be the most important in our entire curriculum for secondary education majors, because the most standard and traditional American elementary through high school mathematics curriculum focuses on functions as the most primary object (out of the many that are wonderfully part of the full curriculum) of importance to study—right up through AP Calculus. Because the *Real Analysis* course shows students the theoretical "whys" that are behind the calculations and concepts in those el-hi mathematics classes, a student who does well in that class is one who I believe is going to have the knowledge and deep understanding of the mathematics that support some of the very best teachers. Rachel's got it. The material in *Real Analysis* was a perfect fit for her. She was one of the best students in the class, and the class was one of her best courses at Butler. I am absolutely confident that she would prove to be a gifted teacher in the full array of your secondary education mathematics courses, able to teach any one of them from *Prealgebra* all the way up to *AP Calculus BC*, especially as she continues to gain the comfort teaching and the abilities to teach a variety of topics well that comes not only with natural talent (which she has) but many years of experience (which she is dedicated to gain). She is committing her future to teaching mathematics. She loves the subject and she loves children and wants them to find abilities and self-potential they may not realize they have. She can teach anyone mathematics, and she makes it fun.

I have also served throughout her time at Butler as the chair in the Mathematics & Actuarial Science Department, and so I have had the pleasure of interacting with Rachel as she has developed throughout her years as an undergraduate. In addition, I can attest that Rachel works very well with other people—both peers and adults. She is very much a supportive team player. For example, in the transition course, I noticed she welcomed others to study with her, and she played a strong but subtly effective leadership role, speaking up in class and always having a superb positive attitude. Her support for her teachers in the classroom reflects her deep appreciation of what her Butler faculty members have done for her, and it shows how she approaches each relationship in the working community in a positive way and with respect for authority. She is friendly, respectful, and happy as she works on mathematics, and she is a delight to be around.

My colleagues and I think of Rachel as one of the very best future Secondary Ed teachers coming out of this senior class—and all of them are terrific. Part of that is because she understands a teacher's important influence on young students' lives. She firmly and rightly believes that she can turn students who have never valued academic work into lifetime learners. She firmly and rightly believes it is important to show young people they can solve mathematical problems—that problem solving is not simply from native gifts, but it can be *taught*. She firmly and rightly believes that mathematics can provide more than structured algorithms to solve exercises—that it can powerfully influence a young person to have confidence in self—and that self-confidence can change a young person's life for the good.

Finally, Rachel Wraley has an outstanding academic record. I am certain she will finish her degree early this summer with an overall Butler GPA above a 3.15, which is a fabulous record in mathematics—one of the sternest grade-granting departments at the University. If you want to hire a future teacher who is going to be dedicated to the profession, supportive of the administrative challenges and demands you might need to set before her, incredibly gifted in the classroom, and compassionate, caring, and effective when teaching young people mathematics, then I cannot think of a better person for you to hire. As you can tell, I'm very high on Rachel—she has my firm confidence in future success, and she has earned my highest recommendation for this position.

Sincerely,

William Johnston

William Johnston
Professor of Mathematics
and Chair of the Department of Mathematics & Actuarial Science