



May 12, 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to write as a character reference in support of Mr. Jacob Taylor. I have enjoyed getting to know Jacob and working with him during the past two years as a Music Major at James Madison University. During his time at JMU so far, I have witnessed him work to become a more refined musician and individual, as well as develop into a qualified aspiring teacher and upstanding young man. I am continuously impressed with his dedication to his academics, to his personal and professional goals, and to the contributions he makes to our music program and university community. I can say, without hesitation, that Jacob is one of the most talented and motivated young adults have entered our program.

As the Associate Director of Bands and Director of the JMU Marching Royal Dukes I've had ample opportunity to observe and work with Jacob as a student in my classroom and member of my ensembles. He goes above and beyond the already demanding requirements of his chosen major to establish a strong record of academic achievement and experiences. He maintains a high level of preparedness and professionalism in all that he does, which contributes to the success of all aspects of the program and individuals with whom he works. I have worked most directly with Jacob as a member of our 525-member marching band. He has been a member for two years and a member of our leadership team this past season as a Section Leader. In this position, Jacob worked effectively with a section of 50 of his peers. He demonstrated quality management and organizational skills, established a strong professional and personal rapport with each member, and was an effective and natural leader by way of his patience, respectful cooperation, positive attitude, sincere communications skills, and engaging personality.

As a student leader in both concert and marching ensembles, he works successfully with both peers and superiors alike. I have found Jacob to possess a strong work ethic and personal motivation unmatched by many of his peers. He is an effective communicator, a good listener, and a young man who is sincerely enjoys being in the presence of others. He has high standards for himself and those around him, motivating his colleagues to excel and achieve. He is truly an ideal role model for those with whom he works, and an admired mentor to the members of our band program at JMU. He possesses an eagerness to learn while also contributing the knowledge he has gained from his past experiences in music. He has been fortunate to have studied with several master teachers – including his parents – all of whom have had a significant influence on his current career path. They have helped him achieve success in the past, continue to inspire and support him today, and set a positive trajectory for creating a future full of potential.

He approaches the daily struggles of college life and the challenges of maturation with humility and poise. While his intense attention to detail, high expectations for himself (and those around him), desire to contribute to and serve his community, and focus on creating a successful future may be the cause of occasional anxiety or frustration, this ultimately motivates and inspires him to

make the most of his college experience. However, when he falters (as we all do), he does so honestly and humbly, yet with great desire to redeem himself, learn from his experience, and work to improve.

As a college professor and director of one of the largest collegiate band programs in the country, I am fortunate to work with a large, unique, and diverse group of young men and women each year. I have found that college students can offer both the best and the worst of the human condition – and it is my goal (and responsibility) as an educator to help them channel the best of themselves in order to work towards becoming the most successful and productive citizens possible. I have no doubt that Jacob has that potential and I look forward to continuing my work to help him realize his future goals and aspirations. Additionally, I can attest to the need for quality teachers in our communities, individuals who are going to contribute great things to our future students and the American education system. I know that Jacob Taylor will be one of our most promising contributing members once he completes his coursework at James Madison and is able to enter the workforce.

I appreciate this opportunity to write on his behalf, and hope that the professional and personal perspective I am able to provide will help speak to his character, integrity, and capacity as a young adult with great potential. If I can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to reach out, using the contact information listed below. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Ridders". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "S" and "R".

Scott Ridders  
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*Director, JMU Marching Royal Dukes*  
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