

23 June 2019

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To Whom it May Concern:

My name is Rowan French, and I am a recent graduate from an Honors undergraduate program in Animal Biology at the University of Alberta. In the summer of 2018, Dr. Gustavo Silva de Miranda supervised my research on schizomids (Arachnida) at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History (NMNH). He also led a week-long arachnid collecting expedition in April 2019 in which I took part. Throughout the period that I have known Gustavo, he has demonstrated exceptional abilities as a research mentor, problem solver, and communicator.

When I first contacted Gustavo in February 2018, I indicated my interest in graduate studies and my desire to expand my skillset in arthropod systematics. He proposed a project on the taxonomy, phylogeny, and phylogeography of Madagascan Schizomida that excited me, and the three months that I spent at NMNH were incredibly instructive and rewarding. Gustavo offered close mentorship, provided clear explanations and demonstrations of techniques, and maintained a supportive, constructive approach to supervision. Even when I encountered problems with a molecular method, Gustavo encouraged me to be positive. He reminded me that trouble-shooting is a vital component of the scientific process, and together we tested potential solutions until the problem was resolved. Gustavo's resiliency and unwavering support helped shift my attitudes toward setbacks in research. Above all, I appreciate that Gustavo treated me not as a pair of hands to assist with his ongoing projects, but as a junior colleague whose unique interests and enthusiasm should be nurtured.

Gustavo also identified or created opportunities for me that extended well beyond my specific duties as an intern. He helped me to attend numerous museum-wide R workshops, systematics seminars, and journal clubs that were intended primarily for graduate students and postdocs. And when Gustavo became aware of a Global Genome Initiative grant opportunity, he invited me to serve as a co-author on the research proposal and as a participant in an associated collecting trip to California. These unexpected opportunities have already had a significant positive impact on my career trajectory. In particular, they confirmed my interests in arthropod evolution, and helped me to craft successful graduate school applications and funding proposals. I will begin my PhD in ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of Toronto in September 2019, thanks in no small part to my work with Gustavo at NMNH.

Gustavo is a remarkable mentor who demonstrated a consistent and sincere interest in my personal and professional development. His enthusiasm for his eight-legged study organisms is obvious and infectious, and his inherent teaching and communication abilities make him an

outstanding research supervisor. I have no doubt that future students will benefit immensely from Gustavo's mentorship, as I have. Should you have any questions about my interactions with Gustavo, please do not hesitate to contact me at [rlfrench@ualberta.ca](mailto:rlfrench@ualberta.ca).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Rowan French', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rowan French