

National Aeronautics and
Space Administration



Ames Research Center
Moffett Field
Mountain View, CA 94035-1000

RE: Letter of Recommendation for Justin Self

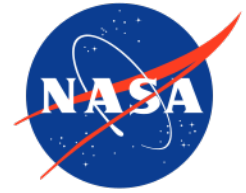
To Whom It May Concern:

It is with great pleasure that I recommend Justin Self for an internship with JPL. I was Justin's mentor during his 2020 NASA Community College Aerospace Scholars research program. Currently, I work as a Data Curator for NASA's GeneLab project, and I am part of the Radiation Biophysics Lab at NASA Ames as a Molecular Research Scientist studying biomarker susceptibility to space radiation. From the beginning, Justin stood out as hard-working, intelligent, focused, and motivated. He was always prepared with a plan for what action items to tackle in the group project, and he brought his expertise and insight as a passionate mechanical engineer capable of effectively communicating with his peers. He also showed an impressive ability to lead the other team members on the team through complex literature and project ideas when they were confused. Full of passion and patience, it was clear that Justin cared about helping his fellow students and progressing the team to success, as demonstrated by their achievements as winning team of the final competition.

Justin's passion and curiosity for aerospace-related projects was clear from the beginning. He was excited about being part of an interdisciplinary and dynamic team, bringing in his mature perspectives and worldviews to a group that needed a little guidance to start. From the first day, Justin stepped up and organized the team, asking everyone to discuss their areas of expertise and what roles suited them. He took on the Mechanical Engineer position of our Mission to Mars team and led every engineering meeting, making sure that everyone's input was considered equally while challenging his peers to think beyond what they previously knew. As the engineering lead, he expanded everyone's perspectives with his insightful questions and input, bringing in assets of his research experience and professional development to every meeting. Diligently organized, he curated master spreadsheets, documents, and polls to keep everyone on track with budgets, purchases, mission details, and individual input. He even encouraged other teammates to participate in the extra activities of the program to get extra points for our team, letting everyone know how interesting they were or what he learned as a result of completing them. Personally, I was impressed with his ability to corral the group to be efficient and detail oriented while remaining on-task himself. What was most impressive was how Justin was able to manage all of his professional duties along with his personal responsibilities. Along with managing all of the engineers on the team, assisting the Project Manager with her duties, and keeping up with his individual role and research, he brought in light-heartedness and humor, helping ease the tension when stress was high or group mentality faltered. His "dad humor" brought a frequent and much-needed chuckle, and stories of his young child's affinity for space motivated and delighted the team during stressful periods.

When it came to the final group presentation, Justin was prepared to lead the team to success. He gave others advice on how to format slides and the presentation as a whole for uniformity, and he encouraged the group to practice often in order to get the flow down properly. He listened attentively to each of his team members' presentation parts, offering feedback and asking difficult questions. He encouraged his team mates to hold each other accountable for doing their parts and presenting their work with pride. He caught a fellow teammate's incorrect statistic, something that was vital to the integrity of the basis of their mission, and he himself took constrictive feedback critically, making sure to incorporate it into his presentation parts. Because of this, the team was well-prepared to answer a number of questions from judges during their final presentation, and, not surprisingly, they were chosen as the top winning team for their carefully researched and well-thought-out mission objectives and plans. I could not have been prouder of this team, and I know that much of that research, planning, and diligence came as a result of Justin's dedication to the project. Much of his work in creating group cohesiveness has even led to the team still staying in touch with one another as they encourage each other on achieving their goals and offer advice and wisdom when needed.

National Aeronautics and
Space Administration



Ames Research Center
Moffett Field
Mountain View, CA 94035-1000

It is due to Justin's achievements and commitment to aerospace research and engineering that I know he will be successful in this internship. During the time that I have worked with Justin, he proved to be an incredibly dedicated and invaluable team player and leader without whom many of the progress of his team would not have been possible. Furthermore, his dedication to social justice projects outside of his STEM work shows his compassion and empathy towards caring for individuals not just professionally, but holistically. I could not be prouder of what he has accomplished during and outside of his NASA NCAS internship, and I have no doubt that he will continue to be successful in his future pursuits. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or would like to discuss further.

Kindly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sonali Verma".

Sonali Verma
Data Curator & Research Scientist
GeneLab, NASA Ames Research Center