

Applicant: Dylan George
Mentor: Dr. Colleen Webb



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To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to write this letter of recommendation in support of Dylan George's application to the US-Africa Advanced Studies Institute on Mathematical Modeling of Infectious Diseases in Africa. Dylan is in his third year as a Ph.D. student with me and is among the very best graduate students that I have encountered. He has a great background for the Institute and experience working in interdisciplinary groups, so I think he will both contribute and learn a lot at the Institute.

Dylan is driven by his interests in predicting emerging diseases and recognizes the importance of theory and the necessity of modeling approaches in moving forward this field. He has made a number of conscious choices to place himself on an academic path that will give him the needed training. Dylan participates in CSU's NSF IGERT in quantitative ecology, which has allowed him to take a number of quantitative courses. By this summer, Dylan will have completed graduate courses in applied statistics, probability theory, stochastic processes, dynamical systems, theoretical ecology and evolution, and a specialty course focused on stochastic realizations of ODE models. He has also completed biology courses on disease ecology and parasitology and vector biology. For his dissertation, Dylan is working on two disease projects: models of seasonal dynamics in bat rabies and a metapopulation model of plague in prairie dogs. He is particularly interested in inferences of the rabies work for emerging diseases since bats are important hosts for several emerging diseases.

Dylan is a bright, hard-working, charismatic and highly motivated student. Dylan is easy going, and hence, easy to work with. His writing and oral communication skills are excellent. He communicates well both in an interpersonal and scientific context. Dylan is very interested in interdisciplinary work and has experience working collaboratively. He initiated a graduate student project involving students from statistics, mathematics, and biology in modeling bovine tuberculosis in wild elk populations as a project for the IGERT program, and he is participating in another interdisciplinary project on modeling disease networks in my lab.

Dylan has all of the components that he needs to make a real contribution to disease modeling and prediction: a strong quantitative background, research in disease, and experience working in an interdisciplinary and collaborative context. However, he does not have any formal training in disease modeling that would help him to pull all of the components together. Attending the Advanced Studies Institute would help give him the framework that he needs to integrate his skills and experiences.

Finally, Dylan has strong interests and a background in public policy and international development. He is very interested in working in public health after his Ph.D. One of the most exciting aspects of the Institute for Dylan is the opportunity to work collaboratively on disease in Africa. Dylan will be a great asset to the Institute because he is well qualified and highly motivated to do this type of research. As Dylan's advisor, I would be happy for Dylan to incorporate this type of collaboration into his research at CSU. I also work with disease modeling, and I am willing to participate in or provide other support for collaborative research if appropriate or needed.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any additional questions.

Sincerely,
Colleen T. Webb

Colleen T. Webb, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor