

To Whom it May Concern,

As the Volunteer Coordinator at Jenkinson's Aquarium, I would like to express the important mentorship relationship we have established with Communications High School in Wall Township, NJ. For many years we have allowed students from Communication High School to work alongside our full time staff members to learn the essentials of animal husbandry, aquarium facilities management and positively interacting with our visitors. Their students job shadow the aquarium staff to perform a variety of tasks, including exhibit maintenance, proper animal care of a diverse animal collection, providing informative talks to our visitors, as well as leading groups on educational guided tours throughout our aquarium. We have been extremely pleased year after year with the students we have interacted with from Communication High School. This includes their commitment to being punctual and diligent, as well as behave in a professional manner at all times. We look forward to our continued relationship with the high school and their exceptional students. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel to contact me. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Linelle Smith

Volunteer Coordinator/Supervisor

Jenkinson's Aquarium

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COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

COLUMBIA COLLEGE
THE FU FOUNDATION SCHOOL OF ENGINEERING AND APPLIED SCIENCE

Excellence in Action Award
Advance CTE: State Leaders Connecting Learning to Work
RE: Communications High School

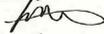
Dear Excellence in Action Award Committee,

I am writing to you today as a proud alumnus of Communications High School (CHS), a career academy part of the Monmouth County Vocational School District in New Jersey. After graduating from CHS in 2012, I enrolled in Cornell University and graduated *magna cum laude* in 2016. I currently work at Columbia University in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions and Financial Aid. I think that CHS is a truly exceptional example of the power of career and technical education, as evidenced through my particular educational and professional pathway, and the pathways of my Class of 2012 peers.

In my experience, MCVSD provides an unusually diverse array of programs and opportunities in career and technical education to the students of Monmouth County. The five career academies (which are just one piece of a larger array of programs) are not only highly selective in their admissions process, but also provide students a highly rigorous and challenging educational environment. To me, this presents a problem: how can a highly-selective school receiving Perkins funding implement the mission of CTE while still supporting the lofty post-secondary goals of its students? To complicate this, many of the students at CHS, myself included, will have career and academic goals that evolve over time, sometimes away from the core CTE objective of CHS. Yet, the CTE education is not lost on those students: the teachers and administrators of CHS are able to construct the curriculum in such a way that the skills learned are easily transferable to virtually any field. While a student educated in Journalism, for example, might not pursue a direct career in journalism, the writing skills, interview methods, planning strategies, etc. they learned from those courses will be empowering in any career. This was the case with me: while at CHS, I focused mostly on journalism. While my professional path took a different route, I use the skills I learned in those classes every day, and I truly would not have been able to achieve the level of professional success I have without my CHS education.

To be clear, though, most students at CHS pursue a career directly in the CTE areas of the curriculum. In this sense, CHS has also been extraordinarily successful. Many of my peers are now illustrators, broadcast journalists, public relations professionals, and web developers, just to name a few. The true excellence of CHS exists in this duality: that those students who do not pursue a career in the CTE areas of the school *are just as successful* as those who do not. The CTE education at CHS teaches students not just the skills they need for the specific fields of the career cluster, but also *how* to learn career-specific skills. This ability is so incredibly valuable, and those who possess it will succeed in the workplace, regardless of how they get there. Communications High School is, I think, unique in its eagerness to teach the *how* and the *why*, an important addition to the traditional career and technical education. If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



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