

August 4, 2025

To the Kelly S. Ellis Scholarship Review Committee:

It is my pleasure to write this letter in support of Jakiya Hanford, an exceptional student in our Master of Athletic Training Program. My name is Rachel Johnson; I am an Assistant Professor of Athletic Training at Mercer University. In my time working with Jakiya, she has proven to be an outstanding student, leader, and community builder in the program. She exemplifies the values this scholarship seeks to promote: academic excellence, leadership, and a deep commitment to advancing the profession of athletic training. Therefore, it is my pleasure to strongly recommend Jakiya Hanford for the Kelly S. Ellis Athletic Training Scholarship.

This past semester was especially rigorous. In just six weeks, students had three courses, spending about 30 hours a week in class. For any student, let alone a first semester graduate student, this can be a challenging situation. Jakiya met this situation head on, performing very well in both of my courses. She often came to me during and outside of class to ask questions and get help on content she wanted to improve, and I frequently saw her studying throughout the semester outside of class hours. The end of the semester was particularly demanding, with two final practicals and two final exams within two days; to prepare for these she not only managed her own coursework and studying, but also organized study sessions with other students that benefited several of her classmates. Her initiative and empathy stood out as hallmarks of the kind of professional she is becoming. As an undergraduate student, she spent two years with the athletic training department gaining experience and held multiple employment positions while enrolled in her undergraduate program. I believe this shows not only her excellent academic ability, but her internal drive to be a great athletic trainer and her respect for the profession.

Jakiya also currently serves as a College of Health Professions student ambassador, where she represents the Master of Athletic Training Program. This is consistent with her record of leadership roles at her undergraduate university, where she served as Vice President of the National Honor Society and Battalion Commander in ROTC. She is also a member of the Alpha Phi Omega National Service Fraternity. She wants to continue in leadership roles moving forward through mentoring, serving as a preceptor, participating in service projects, and being actively involved in athletic training professional and leadership organizations.

Due to the demands of a graduate athletic training program, Jakiya has had to decrease the amount of time she can spend working to support her education. A scholarship of any amount would make a significant difference in her life. This would relieve some financial pressure and open the door for greater involvement in professional, scholarship, and leadership activities.

I believe that Jakiya shows a strong capacity to be an academically successful student, as well as to become a leader in the profession; not only by providing excellent care as an athletic trainer for a professional sports team or college team, but also by mentoring future members of the profession while also giving back to the profession through leadership and service opportunities. Without reservation I recommend Jakiya Hanford for the Kelly S. Ellis Athletic Training Scholarship. Her passion for athletic training, coupled with her academic excellence and commitment to service, make her the kind of future professional this scholarship was created for. If you have additional questions or would like more information, please reach out to me.

Sincerely,



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