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**From:** Jes Staley <[REDACTED]>  
**To:** 'jeevacation@gmail.com' <jeevacation@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** 12/11/2010 4:37:26 PM  
**Subject:** Fw: Re:

Below is the recommendation from the other physics professor at Bowdoin on behalf of Alexa.

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**From:** Alexa N. Staley  
**To:** Jes Staley  
**Sent:** Sat Dec 11 11:13:46 2010  
**Subject:** RE: Re:

strange. I will copy and paste:

I am very pleased to have this opportunity to recommend Alexa Staley to you. I first met her as one of the outstanding students in my class, Physics 104: Introductory Physics II, in her first year at Bowdoin. Since that time I have had the pleasure of watching her develop into a dedicated researcher and leader of our senior class physics students. Her strength of purpose and active intelligence are notable among our majors.

Alexa is quite serious about physics and began taking courses at the 300 level (namely, Methods of Theoretical Physics, the watershed courses in our sequence for students that intend graduate study in physics) in the fall of her sophomore year. Doing so opened doors to upper level theoretical courses that otherwise might have been blocked by her study away semester because of course sequencing issues. Her strong performance in both 200 and 300 level course work led to the award of the Hall Prize, our "most promising sophomore" prize, named for Bowdoin graduate and discoverer of the eponymous effect, Edwin Herbert Hall.

In the spring of her sophomore year Alexa was a student in my Statistical Mechanics course, Physics 229. This course has the reputation of being one of the more challenging in our major sequence and is often put off until junior or senior years. For many students, the concepts of statistical mechanics are elusively abstract and the mathematical reasoning strangely different from other physics applications. Alexa's previous exposure to advanced mathematical methods was a clear asset. Her weakness, which is common to sophomores in the class, was a lack of experience with the applied problem solving strategies necessary for the wide variety of examples used to illustrate statistical methods. In spite of this, Alexa demonstrated a good, clear grasp of essential elements of the problems and would clearly communicate her ideas and questions in class and in private discussion. Her submitted solutions were always exemplary. Her A- reflects excellent mastery of the course material and steadily growing sophistication as a problem solver.

As Departmental Chair, I consulted closely with Alexa about her course choices for her junior semester away at the University of Otago in New Zealand. She was highly committed to the adventure of exploring another culture, but determined not to sacrifice her academic priorities. Thus, she deliberately chose to visit an English speaking country where advanced course work in Physics could be part of her program. We discussed the difference in course levels carefully, but for a variety of reasons, she ultimately chose an upper level Quantum and Atomic Physics course for which she had insufficient background. In response, she dove in and taught herself the material in the first few chapters of Griffiths's Quantum Mechanics textbook in a matter of weeks. Although her own report of this daunting experience tends to minimize her level of mastery, I cannot name more than a handful of students<sup>[1]</sup> in my 15 years of teaching at Bowdoin that would embrace and excel at this challenge the way that Alexa did. Her unbending commitment to "catching up" and not dropping into a lower level course for review is a symptom of both her intellectual ambition and her work ethic. She has talent, works hard, and earns her success. I am sure that my colleague, Thomas Baumgarte, who has supervised her senior honors thesis, will provide additional examples of her independence and drive. They have been distinguishing characteristics of her work.

In summary, Alexa will bring an unusual degree of commitment and excellent preparation for graduate  
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work in physics to your program. She has more than the necessary talent, initiative and ambition to succeed in a research intensive program. I give her my highest recommendation: She will be an excellent scientist.

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<sup>[1]</sup> This group that includes students who have gone on to top graduate programs at CalTech, UCLA, Berkeley, and UIUC.

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**From:** Jes Staley [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Saturday, December 11, 2010 11:13 AM  
**To:** Alexa N. Staley  
**Subject:** Re:

Weird. I don't see the attachment.

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**From:** Alexa N. Staley  
**To:** Jes Staley  
**Sent:** Sat Dec 11 11:08:11 2010  
**Subject:**

what about now?

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