



Vail Academy & High School

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Principal: Mr. Dennis Barger

Assistant Principal: Mr. Mario Balderrama

VAHS is a small Learning community that Encourages Achievement, Responsibility and Nurtures relationships for Success!

September 19, 2024

To Whom It May Concern,

I am honored to write this letter of recommendation for Yuechuan (Canyon) Li, an exemplary student at Vail Academy and High School. As his high school counselor for the past two years, I have had the privilege of witnessing Canyon's academic and personal triumphs. He would be an exceptional student to attend your University.

Beyond academic excellence, Canyon has a drive to learn and improve himself through study, the likes of which I have never witnessed before. I have been a high school counselor for 16 years, and I have never had a student like Canyon. Canyon works harder than any student I have ever known and seems to have a deep personal drive for self-betterment and knowledge. Canyon will be one of those special students, the elite of the elite. He learns for learning's sake and has an unparalleled thirst for knowledge.

I witnessed firsthand Canyon's pursuit of knowledge as he took it upon himself to self-learn 10 AP subjects in his sophomore and junior years. He would often come to my office to discuss in-depth the various subjects he was learning. Listening to him speak about these subjects like physics, calculus, and chemistry; I saw the passion he had for each of them and how much time and energy he spent learning them.

One aspect of Canyon that may not be evident in his college application is how much he is a leader on campus amongst his peers. He is highly respected probably in large part to how open he is to helping others in their pursuit of knowledge and understanding. He wants others to achieve like him and has an inspiring effect on his peers.

I want to also mention Canyon's ability to pursue his studies while facing stress and adversity in his family. His mother fell ill with a life-threatening heart condition during his AP exams in 2024. As her only child, he had to attend to his mother's health first and foremost. He was able to contact me to reschedule some of his exams and still ended up completing each and every one of his exams while his mother was in the hospital for the entire month. Most of these exams were subjects he self-taught to himself over the course of the school year. I was so impressed with his ability to maintain focus on his exams while attending to his mother and grandmother's needs over the course of those weeks.

Canyon is the hardest working student I have ever come across in my 16 years as a high school counselor. He schedules his time out like a high achieving college or graduate school student. He dedicates his time not only to study, but to tutoring his peers and working on his non-profit collaboration. He finds interest in all subjects and is an endless pursuer of knowledge. He receives my highest possible recommendation as a person and a scholar. He would make an exceptional addition to your University.

Sincerely,

Michael Gutman
Counselor, Vail Academy and High School
520-879-1906
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Vail Academy and High School



VAHS LEARNS

*"Vail High School is a small Learning community
that Encourages high academic and social Achievement.
We foster Responsibility through Nurturing individual relationships for life long Success."*

Donna Misciagna

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September 30, 2024

Questbridge National College Match

To Whom it May Concern,

It is a great pleasure to write this letter of recommendation for Yuechuan, also known as Canyon Li, whose presence in my classroom has been nothing short of transformational. I have known Canyon for three years. Let me share a story about a young scholar who managed to redefine two decades of teaching experience. Upon his arrival in the United States in July 2022, Canyon faced language barriers but quickly excelled in Algebra I, demonstrating his natural talent in mathematics. Canyon came into my teaching as a recommendation from Mrs. Feehs, his Algebra I teacher, who was immediately struck by his exceptional aptitude in mathematics. He joined my Algebra II Honors class in August 2022, full of questions, evidencing a depth of understanding beyond his years.

Canyon progressed from Algebra I to Calculus BC within just two years, a testament to his exceptional mathematical prowess and quick learning capability. One day, Canyon raised his hand while discussing a complex Algebra II problem related to polynomial functions. The room fell silent while he solved the problem in moments, without pen or paper and explained the solution with clarity such that his classmates instantly understood. While observing his intuitive grasp of mathematics concepts and natural ability to teach others, I realized I was witnessing the emergence of a mathematical prodigy. Canyon's intellectual thirst was simply insatiable. He would regularly stay after class and discuss topics we hadn't addressed, moving into some advanced theories and solutions. I remember the day he came to me with a list of questions involving pre-calculus and statistics, subjects he had to study independently because these AP classes were not offered at our school. It was incredible that he could master these subjects independently, and it spoke volumes about his self-discipline and dedication to learning.

After taking Algebra 2 Honors, Canyon was able to advance all the way to Calculus BC. As Canyon went from my Algebra II straight into AP Calculus BC, he wasn't only mastering the content but also started building instructional models in Desmos to present to his peers. He was committed to sharing and helping others learn. Canyon has consistently excelled in all my math classes, often tutoring his peers and helping four other Calculus students grasp complex concepts to help prepare them for the

AP exams, which had become an integral part of their success stories. Canyon demonstrated mastery of Precalculus and Calculus by earning a score of 5 on AP exams for both subjects. In fact, he was one of my first two students to reach Calculus BC and the only one to achieve a score of 5 across all mathematics AP exams, including Pre-Calc, Calc AB, and Calc BC. When Canyon scored a five on his BC Exam, he was the first student I had ever taught to do so. The success was a proud moment for us all, reaffirming my belief in his unique capabilities. His subsequent role as a teaching assistant and his further studies in Calculus 3 at Pima College only continued to demonstrate his commitment to mathematics.

Canyon is not only a mathematically talented student but also a visionary who upgrades and changes the understanding of all the people around him. This paper tells his story, from the young boy fumbling his way through a new language to being a mentor and leader among his peers; it's one of resiliency, perseverance, and remarkable talent. As I teach AP Precalculus and Calculus AB as a combined class, Canyon has become an integral part of the class as teaching assistant, being able to assist, explain concepts and provide feedback to students in both classes. With all that he does to further himself and his peers academically, Canyon still finds time to participate in extracurricular activities. Canyon is an indispensable member of both Science Olympiad and Future Business Leaders of America, competing at the State and National levels in both.

In addition, Canyon takes initiative and creates his own opportunities when they don't currently exist. Our school does not offer AP science classes, so Canyon took the initiative to self-study AP Pre-Calculus, AP Statistics, and AP Physics, frequently having discussions with me after school for a more profound understanding of advanced topics.

I am honored to wholeheartedly support Yuechuan [Canyon] Li's admission to Stanford University. This once-in-a-lifetime mathematical talent will continue to excite and innovate within the subject. I know that he will bring as much to your campus, as he has to ours.

Thank you in advance for considering this outstanding young man in your program. Please feel free to contact me with any further questions at misciagnad@vailschooldistrict.org.

Donna Misciagna

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donna Misciagna", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Vail Academy and High School
High School Math Teacher