

University at Buffalo
State University of New York

Department of Computer Science and Engineering

December 31, 2013

Graduate Admissions Committee
Re: applicant Joseph Melber

Dear Graduate Admissions Committee:

I am delighted to provide a reference for Mr. Joseph Melber. I have known him as a student in my Spring 2013 course “CSE250: Data Structures (In C++),” which included visits to my office hours and e-mail contact since. I am an Associate Professor with long service at UB.

Mr. Melber not only earned an A, he topped 100% in total course points. The way to achieve that is to come within a point of perfect on each of two midterm exams, ace the final, and complete all the final project extra credit. He is an engineering major with a computer science minor, which explains how he took my bellwether 3rd-semester course in his junior year.¹ The quality I noticed most is that he likes things to be set out precisely. I wrote my assignments with a fair bit of “flex” and provision for things students might encounter along alternative methods, even wrong turns (this also promotes diversity in code submissions). His questions were mainly feeling out boundaries of what was required, and some debugging helps. Making the precision come from within, first debugging then design-by-contract, seemed to be a learning experience for him through March, but he certainly got it by April. He was one of few students to add their own REQUIRES-ENSURES-INVARIANT annotations to his data-structure code (beyond the couple in my sketch from lecture and the ones written into the project spec), and the ones he added were “just right”—not overdone. His final work was elegant. Based on observing this, I think his move toward fully programmable gate arrays is natural and excellent for his talent.

In sum, I can give him my highest recommendation, and I will be happy to answer any further questions you may have.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Kenneth W. Regan

¹A half-dozen mathematics majors were also directed to take the course with me by John Ringland and Bill Menasco running our “URGE” undergraduate research seminar—that they likewise aced everything did not affect the rest since I use a fixed standard rather than “curve after the fact”; I have hence based “top-5%” etc. on all seniors rather than on my class of 90. I had a similar invasion in Spring 2010—my point is that Melber was fully up with these guys, well from his transcript he wasn’t far from a math minor on top of all this.