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Current Date

Ms. Ima Recruiter
Human Resources
The Urban Institute
2100 M Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20037

Dear Ms. Recruiter,

I am writing to request an interview for a Research Assistant position at the Urban Institute. While I would be delighted to work anywhere in the organization, I am particularly interested and qualified to support research initiatives in the Metropolitan Housing & Communities Policy Center. I grew up in the D.C. area, where my mother is a Civil Rights lawyer who specializes in housing discrimination, so I have been familiar with the work of the Urban Institute for years. I found out about this opening through my school, Pomona College, which is part of the Selective Liberal Arts Consortium (SLAC).

My extensive independent research on urban and environmental justice issues makes me a strong candidate for the Research Assistantship. In the attached resume, I describe a ten-week independent summer research project in which I investigated the effects of discriminatory housing policies on black communities in Richmond, California. The National Fair Housing Alliance presented my research at its annual Fair Housing Fundamentals School to illustrate the way governments implement segregation. One of my findings was that governing officials and city planners literally built their goals into the map of Richmond; politics shaped the urban landscape. This conclusion gives me an appreciation for the way the Urban Institute applies its research through policy recommendations.

In addition to a nuanced understanding of the forces that define urban life, I have gained hard fact-finding and analytical skills through my research. The methods for my independent research have been more historical or anthropological than quantitative, but I have a thorough urban economics background and classroom experience with economic data analysis using ArcGIS and Stata. My independent research has also given me knowledge of the research process that comes only through trial and error: I have dealt with wary and hostile interviewees; I have spent two weeks pursuing a line of investigation, only to find that it was not the most important issue, and to redefine my project and start over.

I have proven my commitment to urban issues through my academic program at Pomona. I decided I wanted to major in Urban Studies during my sophomore year. Like the other SLAC schools, Pomona is too small to have an Urban Studies department. It did have the courses and faculty expertise to support a major. In conjunction with my academic advisor, I designed a new track through the Environmental Analysis major that will allow me to complete a program of study that is virtually identical to the undergraduate Urban Studies program at the University of Pennsylvania.

I believe these qualifications, as well as those listed on my resume, would make me an asset to a research team at the Urban Institute. Thank you for your attention, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.