

NOTE: This letter was originally provided for the University of Cambridge, and has been repurposed for this application.



STANFORD UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE  
DEPARTMENT OF GENETICS

**Michael Snyder, Ph.D.**

Stanford B. Ascherman Professor and Chair  
Director, Center for Genomics and Personalized Medicine

Phone: (650) 736-8099  
Fax: (650) 725-1534

March 20, 2024

Dear Selection Committee,

I am writing this letter with great enthusiasm to strongly recommend **Manuel Faria** as an outstanding candidate for the MPhil in Cognitive Neurosciences at the University of Cambridge, with all the possible funding that may be available to support his candidacy. I have had the privilege of working closely with Manuel over the past few years as his professor and research advisor within the field of precision medicine at the Stanford Healthcare Innovation Lab. Through my interactions with him, I have witnessed his remarkable sharpness, breadth of knowledge, initiative, and genuine passion for advancing science and human health. In my role as Stanford's Chairman of Genetics, and former Director for Genomics and Proteomics at Yale University, I have met many bright and talented individuals worthy of praise, but among these, Manuel truly stands out as the one percent of undergraduates I have worked with since 1986. He is a visionary student with charisma, kindness, and skepticism with an appetite for innovation and research.

Nearly two years ago, I was introduced to Manuel in our *Longevity Venture Capital*, a dynamic course that stretches scientific and entrepreneurial thinking into the space of longevity and aging. He immediately made himself known in the class, asking poignant questions about mitochondrial aging and hormone replacement therapy that made our expert guest speakers think twice before answering. Four quarters later, in our *Science and Technology for Longevity* course, he once again brought his characteristic zest and breadth of knowledge into the classroom, often quoting papers from memory. Most students in the classroom can speak to science, entrepreneurship, psychology, or ethics, but what makes Manuel an outstanding student is his ability to articulately talk about them all. The ability to integrate different lines of thinking is absolutely crucial for scientific innovation, and this is something Manuel excels at. In the classroom, he has demonstrated the ability to deliver impressive papers and presentations that have gotten him invited to Stanford's Applied Longevity Translational Symposium due to their broad interest. More objectively, this ability can be assessed both in his academic performance and induction into Phi Beta Kappa, the biggest academic achievement for Stanford undergraduates.

I have also been Manuel's research supervisor in our genetics and precision medicine group. Here, I would underscore the potential and aptitude that Manuel has for scientific research. In such a short period, he has demonstrated not only knowledge but the ability to create new knowledge. He came into the lab already with a question that he could not help but try to answer. Asking the right questions is the first and most important skill that any scientist worth their salt should develop. Manuel does that. He wanted to understand whether and how the brain could change the aging process, so he spun into his own project investigating the consequences of depression recovery on aging biomarkers. This pursuit really showed me what Manuel is capable of. He was a total novice to this kind of research, but he quickly started communicating with scientists from UCLA, Stanford, and UCSF, and connected with start-up collaborators from Los Angeles, Dubai, and Hong Kong to find affordable ways to execute his idea. He wrote multiple IRB drafts, PowerPoint decks, brochures, and two funding awards: a Longevity Impetus Grant from Impetus and a Longevity Catalyst Award from the National Academy of Medicine (both as first author).

He went through some unsuccessful ideas, and some others that were fruitful, until he finally obtained satisfactory results that will soon be published. He has also authored multiple pieces in different stages of development, including his own first author piece on an idea he calls “psychogenic aging,” which he got to present at the Global Longevity Federation in Dubai. Notably, these efforts were a self-guided pursuit that was solely born out of his interest or rather born out of his commitment to others’ farewell. What Manuel has done and the extent of his contribution is rarely encountered in young scientists, which underscores all more sharply his promise for scientific research as he continues to mature as an academic. I know he will be a stellar and productive researcher in any lab he becomes a part of during graduate school.

Lastly, I would offer some lasting remarks about Manuel’s character outside his academic aptitude. Manuel has overcome a lot in his life and truly finds inspiration in these struggles to help others with science. He volunteers with elderly patients who suffer from dementia and comorbid psychiatric conditions, creates student well-being and de-stress programs for undergraduates, and has even taught cognitive-behavioral workshops to East Palo Alto high school students. His fidelity to mental health goes far beyond research and into his actions outside the lab, which evidently guides his inquiry process with a tangible goal in mind. This combination is the cornerstone of the physician-scientist Manuel is hoping to become, and I know he will. Any institution that accepts Manuel will be accepting a future leader in precision medicine, mental health, and humanitarian care. I am wholeheartedly and unreservedly enthusiastic about endorsing **Manuel Faria**’s application for the University of Cambridge and the Vargas Scholarship. If there are any questions, concerns, or further steps to support Manuel Faria’s candidacy, please reach out to me personally.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "MSnyder".

Michael Snyder, Ph.D.  
Stanford B. Ascherman Professor and Chair, Department of Genetics  
Director, Stanford Center for Genomics and Personalized Medicine  
School of Medicine, Stanford University