



October 22, 2014

**RE: Letter of Support for Elizabeth Sandell's Promotion to Full Professor**

It is without reservation and with my highest endorsement that I provide this letter of support for Elizabeth Sandell's application to the rank of Full Professor. For approximately six months, I served as her direct supervisor in her position as Interim Director of the Undergraduate Research Center (URC). Based on my direct observation of her work ethic, interpersonal skills, managerial capabilities, and leadership, I feel well qualified to write this letter of support for her promotion. In addition, having spent more than 15 years as a faculty member at Minnesota State Mankato, I feel well positioned to evaluate Elizabeth's abilities in the context of the University and the broader higher education community.

During the spring of 2014, the director of the URC, Dr. Marilyn Hart, was selected to serve as the Associate Dean of the College of Science, Engineering and Technology. Very quickly, I needed to find a replacement to serve as the Interim Director for the URC and all of the research related activities. The timing of this search was problematic because I could not provide release to the department and reassignment to the director. Therefore, I had to find someone that was willing to take the assignment on overload with extra duty days. Needless to say, this was not an optimal situation. After soliciting nominees from the URC council, Elizabeth was selected through an interview process to serve as the Interim Director. It became evident quickly, that Elizabeth was the right choice to lead the center.

Elizabeth's leadership as Director of the URC was outstanding. Her job required her to form relationships across all academic colleges and she was successful. Elizabeth also worked with our Foundations office to secure monies for scholarship and travel. Without Elizabeth's work in this area, the funding of research projects and travel would have been greatly diminished. Additionally, Elizabeth engaged the members of the Foundation in the selection and awarding process, which encourages them to be active partners of the center. Under Elizabeth's leadership, the University continued to be an active participant of the MnSCU Conference of Undergraduate Scholarly and Creative Activity. Elizabeth worked in tandem with undergraduate research leaders at the other MnSCU universities. During her tenure as the Interim URC Director, she was assertive, yet appropriate. Elizabeth also supervised graduate assistance and provided them with focus and goals of excellence. Additionally, Elizabeth worked with college Deans and department chairs to secure money for student travel.

Furthermore, I have appreciated Elizabeth's attention to details, problem solving skills, critical thinking skills and her leadership abilities. Please note that Elizabeth has succeeded in other academic arenas that have prepared her for promotion to full professor. She is respected as a teacher, researcher and advisor. Elizabeth is student focused. She has been a great citizen of the University and this was highlighted during her time as Interim URC Director. Elizabeth is lauded by members of the faculty and our student body who deeply value her intelligence, competence, work ethic, and dedication to research and scholarly activity.

Based on my interactions with Elizabeth, I think she is an ideal candidate to be promoted to Full Professor. Dr. Sandell is a strong advocate for undergraduate research, has established a programmatic line of research, is a wonderful mentor and advisor, and has a strong commitment to professional development. If there is any doubt regarding her service to the University, who else would have been willing to take on the leadership of URC for extra duty days while maintaining a full slate of professorial activities? I will always be grateful for her service to the University, our students and faculty, as well as the MnSCU system.

I am sure that other letters speak more directly to her teaching and research. I hope that this letter addresses her devotion to service, advising and support of undergraduate research. If I may answer additional questions about Elizabeth's qualifications or characteristics, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Barry J. Ries", followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Barry J. Ries, Ph.D.  
Associate Vice President of Research and  
Graduate Dean  
507.389.5203  
barry.ries@mnsu.edu