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Alvin S. Bynum Mentor Award Selection Committee
Letter of Support for Dr. Leslie Ashburn-Nardo

Dear Selection Committee:

My name is Gina Seaton, and I am currently a second year student in the Industrial and Organizational Psychology Master of Science Program at Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis. I am writing this letter to recommend Dr. Leslie Ashburn-Nardo as the recipient of the Alvin S. Bynum Mentor Award for 2011. I have worked closely with Dr. Ashburn-Nardo throughout my time at IUPUI, serving as her teaching assistant my first year, her graduate research assistant my second year, and in collaborating on various research projects both years.

Throughout all of these experiences, Dr. Ashburn-Nardo has become one of the most influential professors I have ever had. She exhibits many unique qualities that contribute to her complete demonstration of what an effective professor and mentor should be, consistently excelling in all areas deemed essential of a recipient of the Alvin S. Bynum Mentor Award. Not only does she continually and consistently go above and beyond to support student success, she also helps her students develop both personally and professionally. She takes pride in her role as a professor at IUPUI, and is proud of the accomplishments of the students she mentors.

Dr. Ashburn-Nardo is truly dedicated, and as a result is extremely busy both in terms of involvement in the psychology department, teaching, and researching. Despite her full schedule, in any instance where I am ever in need of advice, have a question, or am concerned with something, I always know I can go to her for support. She is open, honest, sincere, and has a great sense of humor. These qualities create a relaxed atmosphere and draw students to her. Students know that if they go to her for guidance or even just to talk, Dr. Ashburn-Nardo will take time and personalized care to help them.

If you walk past her office at any point during the day, there is a good chance you would see her meeting with a student. This fact is not only additional testament to her interpersonal skills, but also to her excellence in professional and academic mentoring. In my own experience, Dr. Ashburn-Nardo has consistently gone out of her way to discuss my future goals with me, and help me identify different ways to achieve those goals. This has included directing me in research endeavors, suggesting goals, and simply discussing ideas. Dr. Ashburn-Nardo goes above and beyond what is required for the benefit of her students, and has truly made an immensely positive impact on my graduate school experience.

I feel so fortunate to have the opportunity to work so extensively with Dr. Ashburn-Nardo in the department, not only for her sincere enthusiasm and vast knowledge in psychology and psychological research methods, but also for her complete commitment to student success in and out of the classroom. Serving as her teaching assistant my first year of graduate school, I was so impressed by the way she managed and built relationships with students. Inside the classroom, she always showed great concern for student success, and always went out of her way to ensure that students understood the material and were setting themselves up for success. Outside of the classroom, being new to the city of Indianapolis, she helped me to ensure I was transitioning into my new surroundings smoothly.

These qualities, and the strong relationships that Dr. Ashburn-Nardo develops with students, demand excellence, encourage growth, and help students to develop into the best version of themselves possible. Students are able to explore and develop their own interests and are guided in learning valuable life and career skills, all while knowing they have Dr. Ashburn-Nardo to count on and guide them through the process.

When I first entered into the Industrial and Organizational Psychology Program, I was unsure whether or not I wanted to continue on and pursue a Ph.D. in the field, or to seek a job in an applied setting immediately after graduation. With Dr. Ashburn-Nardo’s support and expertise, I gained straightforward insight into my range of options, and she provided with the support and tools to make informed decisions that would help me to identify the best choices for me.

For those students who wish to pursue graduate school, Dr. Ashburn-Nardo makes sure that they have the skills necessary to become successful researchers in the field. Not only does she serve as an excellent role model herself in terms of researching and publishing, she also actively directs and supervises student research and coordinates research conferences and grants. For me personally, the ability to become part of her research lab has provided me with so many valuable experiences that I would have otherwise never had. These experiences have been so significant to me, both in terms of preparing for a Ph.D. and in developing a deeper and more complete understanding of different research methods and the research process.

The passion that Dr. Ashburn-Nardo has for her job as a professor at IUPUI is evident, and her enthusiasm for psychology and research is contagious. The pride and loyalty Dr. Ashburn-Nardo demonstrates for her work does not go unnoticed by students and faculty. Dr. Ashburn-Nardo helps to ensure that students feel the same commitment to their work and to the university by getting them highly involved. Her research lab continues to grow, and students in the lab not only gain essential research experience, they become a part of the psychology department in a more complete way.

Students are committed to the research, the lab group, and to the department because they feel that their contributions are real and valued, and that they are truly a part of the department. This is demonstrated by the fact that undergraduate students who join Dr. Ashburn-Nardo's lab who are not involved in other areas of the department often end up getting involved in other activities like Psychology Club and Psi Chi. Furthermore, for students who decide that psychology is not the career path they will pursue, some even choose to continue to attend research meetings and remain a part of the research lab because they relationships and experiences they gain are so valuable. Dr. Ashburn-Nardo fosters this pride and commitment to the discipline and to IUPUI not only by her sincere enthusiasm, but also by encouragement, consistently praising student accomplishments, and garnering peer support for academic endeavors that lab members partake in.

Leslie Ashburn-Nardo has supplied me with all of the necessary skills, knowledge, and experiences that will support my success in graduate school. Her mentoring has helped so many students, including myself, to develop both personally and professionally. Without her, I believe that not only would I not have had these opportunities and academic and professional development, and my experience in graduate school would not be as rewarding as it has been.

I have been very lucky to have had many good professors throughout my undergraduate and graduate education. However, there have been very few, if any, who demonstrate such sincere enthusiasm for their work and commitment to their students as Dr. Ashburn-Nardo does. She has made such a positive impact on my life. The qualities that she demonstrates as a professor and mentor are rare and special, serving as a standard of excellence. Dr. Ashburn-Nardo is a great role model and mentor for students at IUPUI and is truly deserving of the Alvin S. Bynum Mentor Award.

Sincerely,

gina Seaton

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