IUPUI
UNIVERSITY COLLEGE
INDIANA UNIVERSITY–PURDUE UNIVERSITY
Indianapolis

January 12, 2011

Review Committee
Alvin S. Bynum Mentor Award
Faculty Appointments and Advancement
355 N. Lansing St.
Suite #126
Indianapolis, IN 46202-2896

Dear Review Committee:

It is an honor to nominate Mr. Chris Maroldo for the Alvin S. Bynum Mentor Award. As documented in the accompanying letters from Chris's students and colleagues, he has had a remarkable and positive influence on our most at-risk students—those on academic probation or returning from dismissal. His accomplishments reflect both a personal commitment to mentoring and the ability to work at an institutional level to create a nationally recognized mentoring program. Chris's STAR program (Students Taking Academic Responsibility) has gained this attention for its demonstrated success in building positive academic habits and self-confidence in students on the margin.

As interim dean of University College, I have a good knowledge of Chris's portfolio and performance. As a 2009 recipient of the Bynum Award, I am appreciative of the value our university places on recognizing individuals who work with students at the one-on-one level. Chris has been with IUPUI since 2003 and has an accomplished record of professionalism rooted in a deep concern for our students. His responsibilities in University College include coordinating all academic probation, overseeing dismissal and reinstatement issues, implementing academic policies and procedures, and managing assessment for the Office of Academic and Career Development. Although I have only been in my current administrative position for four months, I had frequent interactions with Chris in my previous role as associate dean for student affairs in the IU School of Liberal Arts. Specifically, I sought Chris out for advice on how to develop mentoring for students in academic difficulty and began attempting to build the sort of intervention program he had created in University College. He was consistently thoughtful and collegial in these conversations. In addition, we served together on the University College Academic Policies and Procedures Committee where we developed new withdrawal and dismissal policies for the college. Chris was instrumental in this work, making certain that University College guidelines matched those for the campus as a whole.

Prior to joining University College, Chris had extensive experience in another state with Talent Search, one of several TRIO programs sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. He had both administrative and teaching responsibilities in this program and worked to mentor students for successful college careers. I believe this experience, working with at-risk young people, predisposed Chris to take his job at IUPUI. He is entirely committed to the urban mission and to

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serving first-generation college students. He has consistently sought opportunities to mentor those individuals who face the greatest challenges to college success because he understands the potential education holds for transforming lives.

Chris's accomplishments are best evidenced by his creation of the STAR program. Participation in STAR is required of all University College students on probation or returning from a dismissal. It consists of one-on-one mentoring (drawn from volunteer staff and faculty across campus) and self-help modules students complete on their own time. To date, several hundred students have participated in STAR, and these individuals have a higher retention rate than seen in the general student population (over 75% for one year). To put this accomplishment in perspective, I recently estimated that only ten percent of liberal arts students who have been placed on probation are retained. National data also point to very poor prospects for students who start their college careers in such deep academic trouble. It is no doubt with this in mind that Chris and his program were recognized in 2010 by the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) as one of two "Outstanding Institutional Advising Program" awards.

Students with whom Chris has worked are keenly aware of his ability to encourage responsibility and self-realization. Thus, one of his supporters acknowledges Chris for *"Regularly going above and beyond expected norms, guiding students to become self-aware and self-motivated. . . . Chris taught me to focus on my future steps along my path instead of judging the steps already taken, allowing me to take control of my path—my life and my future."* In the same vein, another student writes that Chris taught him the importance of *"facing challenges immediately and enjoying the process."* Yet such challenges are offered in a supportive and positive fashion. As a recent graduate attested, *"Chris Maroldo is the person who not once but twice took a chance on me. He believed in me when it was hard for me to see the light at the end of the tunnel for myself."* This sentiment is reflected by a current student who, after nearly giving up, found a supportive and caring mentor in Chris Maroldo. She states: *"From day one, Chris was able to reach me in a manner that no other mentor has done before. He accomplished this by being sympathetic, honest, wise, encouraging, consistent, and resourceful."*

Central to Chris's success is his understanding that mentoring involves creating a human bond as well as inspiring academic achievement. One of his closest colleagues states: *"He gives students, in particular those not doing well academically, a hope that someone here at IUPUI does care and wants them to succeed."* She adds, *"He does this through his respect, availability, and kindness towards all students regardless of academic status."* A faculty colleague echoes this praise, noting that *". . . the connections fostered by the STAR program go far beyond academic support."* Students and colleagues alike recognize Chris's commitment to individuals and his ability to relate them as equals, engaged in a shared pursuit of personal growth and academic success.

Central to the success of the STAR program has been Chris's ability to recruit faculty, staff, and advanced students in support of the enterprise. In fact, to date he has engaged over one hundred volunteers to mentor students in the STAR program. He does not "sell" this commitment lightly, but rather lays out the reality of the challenge, including likely missed appointments, continued struggles in the classroom, and the negative feedback often generated by the students' low self-esteem. Yet, his passion and the well-developed philosophy behind the program make it difficult to say "no." Once engaged, volunteers usually return for more. One faculty member who has participated in the program for several semesters feels fortunate to have had the opportunity because the *"one-on-one connection helps me re-energize my love of teaching . . ."*

The national literature on student success has long indicated the importance of mentoring and personal connections in student retention, completion, and satisfaction with their college experience. Honors programs, undergraduate research opportunities, service learning experiences, internships, practicums, and study abroad experiences all foster these strong connections. However, the majority of these opportunities are aimed at students who have already experienced success. Chris Maroldo has demonstrated the power of mentoring in salvaging students who might otherwise have been left on the discard pile, overlooked as underachievers, or labeled as incapable. Through his long experience in TRIO and at IUPUI, Chris has learned to harness the hunger to achieve and direct it by building on small successes to bring many students back from the brink. As the attached letters attest, Chris Maroldo is remarkable both for his individual mentoring of students and for his construction of a program of support for at-risk students that includes a process to instill self-realization and a growing network of mentors to implement it. In these accomplishments, he embodies the principles the Alvin S. Bynum Award was created to recognize.

Sincerely,

Richard E. Ward
Interim Dean
University College