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Charles R. Bantz
Chancellor, IUPUI
Executive Vice President, Indiana University
355 N. Lansing Street
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December 26, 2008

Dear Chancellor Bantz,

I have been asked to provide an evaluation letter for Ulla Connor in connection with her being nominated for a Chancellor's Professorship at IUPUI. I am more than happy to comply with this request.

Professor Ulla Connor occupies a central and distinctive position in the fast-evolving global world of Applied Linguistics. Given contemporary trends such as the increasing global domination of English and the internationalization of academic and corporate affairs, Applied Linguistics finds itself as an increasingly important player in those trends. There are two aspects of this that are relevant here: One centers around interdisciplinary attempts to delineate the forms and understand the underlying rationales of professional discourses from around the world; the other focuses on matching these understandings with the needs and aspirations of non-native speakers of English as they attempt to find their rightful places in today's professional communities.

I have offered this background sketch to try and situate Ulla Connor within its contemporary context, because she occupies a rather special place not so easily discernible from the extremely copious and impressive information contained in her CV. On the basis of her listed achievements and of her general reputation, both nationally and internationally, she would be included within the world's "Top Twenty" applied linguists, but there are a number of special characteristics that in combination make her close to unique.

First, she is one of very few (Vijay Bhatia only comes immediately to mind) who is equally comfortable and equally recognized in the areas of academic, business and institutional communications. A wonderful example of that is the joint 1999 paper with Anna Mauranen "Linguistic analysis of grant proposals: European Union research grants", which incidentally I nominated for the Horowitz Prize given for the best article published in *English for Specific Purposes* in the preceding calendar year. This took and then modified certain techniques of genre analysis developed for research articles and did

so to great theoretical and practical effect. This paper has already become a key reference not only for ongoing work on the institutional genre of research proposal itself, but also for discourse-analytical studies of business and academic texts in general. More recently, she has added corpus-concordancing techniques (often in collaboration with her close IUPUI colleague Thomas Upton) to her discourse-analytic "toolbox". Earlier proof of the success of this triangulated methodology can be seen in their joint paper on grant proposals in the excellent 2004 *Discourse and the Professions* volume, which co-incidentally she co-edited. Later evidence comes from the co-authored 2007 volume entitled *Discourse on the Move*. (Incidentally, I was asked to write a long (2000 word) review of this book for the official journal of the Linguistics Society of America, which should appear in the second half of 2009.)

Secondly, via her numerous publications and presentations, she has become the leading figure in the analysis and comparison of texts from different cultures. In this, she has, as it were, taken over the mantle of Robert Kaplan of USC, who founded the field in 1966 and has since retired, and made it her own. There is enough in the accompanying record to indicate that Ulla's 1996 volume in the prestigious " Cambridge Applied Linguistics Series" remains a landmark, and indeed ISI statistics or Google Scholar figures confirm this. However, what is even more impressive is how much she has gone on from there, particularly with regard to exploring not so much any longer *how* sets of discourses from a particular cultural context are different from those drawn from another context, but what might be the best *explanations* for such difference. (No easy matter of course.) A key element in all this is that Ulla Connor is herself a native speaker of Finnish and has been able to make use of her experiences in acquiring mastery of English as part of her rhetorical repertoire. There are still relatively few leading applied linguists today who are not native speakers of English, Ulla being one of the principal ones. (And I was intrigued to note from the CV that she has been identified by the Finnish version of *Reader's Digest* as one of five "famous" Finns abroad!)

A third important characteristic is one that I would adjudge to be particularly relevant to the honor for which she is being nominated. Ulla Connor's impressive record as a scholar does not derive from opportunities she might have made for herself to occupy some ivory tower, but has rather to be placed alongside a terrific record of curricular and programmatic achievement and of institutional service. I learned this directly when I was the external member of the 2005 review committee set up to evaluate the *Indiana Center for Intercultural Communication*, where we all were impressed by what she has achieved at IUPUI. The ICIC is very much her creative inspiration, and the Center has become increasingly recognized for its contributions to UIPUI’s commitments to assisting local communities and, more internationally, for its summer institutes and conferences. A further facet of her achievements is her skills in fund-raising and in nurturing important donors.

However, the point I wish to stress in this letter is that these successful and multi-faceted educational initiatives might seem to require full-time commitment from a dedicated individual, while Ulla has apparently done all this while maintaining a flourishing career as an internationally-recognized scholar. This is a time when many of

us older and senior members of our institutions are detecting a rather dismaying diminution of "institutional loyalty" among our younger colleagues. Ulla Connor is a splendid counter-example to this trend.

Bearing these contextualizations in mind, I would now like to return to my opening background sketch. Ulla Connor's work covers both the descriptive-analytic and the pedagogic-curricular wings of applied linguistics in ways that are not true of the leading authorities in Second Language Acquisition. More germane to this particular letter, she has expanded beyond her English for Academic Purposes first area of specialization to incorporate business communications, now including her highly innovative and successful work in fund-raising discourse, and in her important intercultural studies on how job application letters and other types of communication vary (or do not vary) from one culture to the next. In all of this Ulla Connor is a dedicated interculturalist (if there is such a term) to which she brings the subtleties and sophistications that her two disciplinary fields of expertise (linguistics and rhetoric) provide. Indeed we are hosting a small conference at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, next summer on Intercultural Rhetoric and we have invited Professor Connor to be one of our three plenary speakers.

It comes as little surprise then that Professor Connor is well known not only in her first home in Scandinavia and in her second home here in the United States, but everywhere in the world where we find applied linguists. In her frequent travels, she is a splendid ambassador for her scholarship, for her teaching and for her home institution. She has immense energy and is currently even more productive and involved than she has ever been, such as with the summer institutes/conferences at Indianapolis that she has initiated, and with her recent involvements in health literacy and with her research into the communicative needs of international medical post-doctoral fellows. This combination of talents places her in very distinguished company indeed; her peers in this regard might only include Professor Bhatia of the City University, Hong Kong, Professor Bazerman at UCSB, and Professor Hyland at the University of London.

I am therefore very pleased to support Ulla Connor's nomination for a Chancellor’s Professorship. Indeed, she would seem to be a strong candidate for such a distinction. If I can be of any further assistance, I can be most easily reached at jmswales@umich.edu.

Sincerely,

John M. Swales
Emeritus Professor of Linguistics, University of Michigan
Director of the English Language Institute 1987-2001