INDIANA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

DEPARTMENT OF
OPHTHALMOLOGY

and

EQUITY INSTITUTE
on
RACE, CULTURE
and TRANSFORMATIVE
ACTION

620 Union Dr., Room 244
Indianapolis, Indiana
46202

317-274-1148
dsuzuki@iupui.edu

January 11, 2011

Chancellor's Award Selection Committee
Chancellor's Diversity Scholar Award
Indiana University, Purdue University
Indianapolis

Dear Selection Committee Chair,

It is with the highest enthusiasm that I write a letter in support of the nomination of Dr. Robin L. Hughes for the Chancellor's Diversity Scholars Award. I can attest to her excellence in teaching and service in general and particularly as these activities relate to race and diversity. The background that I bring to this evaluation are my 20 years of serving on the Primary Committee of my department, my sitting on committees with Robin, and my experience as a "student" in one of her classes.

Teaching: the range of courses that Dr. Hughes teaches or has taught, is listed in her Curriculum Vitae so I will not comment other than to say that (i) her teaching load appears highly satisfactory and (ii) the number of graduate students that she has or is mentoring appears excellent. In evaluating the teaching performance of Dr. Hughes as a teacher, the basis for my comments are her written statement, my personal experience in her class, and informal conversations with students that I know in her class.

It is clear that Dr. Hughes is passionate about teaching that goes beyond mere dissemination of facts and that she engages students in a manner that fosters continued learning, development of self-insights, self-evaluation, and understanding of the concepts relevant to race studies. An important outcome is that what she fosters in students continues to function beyond the classroom and impacts their subsequent careers and lives. Her teaching is not only excellent, but sets the example for what a truly gifted teacher-facilitator can accomplish in the classroom. Though I have received Teaching Awards, I feel embarrassingly lacking when compared with Dr. Hughes. Clearly, she is deserving of awards in general, and specifically the Chancellor's Diversity Scholar's award.

From personal experience, I can attest to the impactful power of Robin's teaching methodology. When I learned that she was covering Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in her class, I asked if I could informally join her students. My experience was immensely rewarding. Freire's work forms the conceptual foundation for anyone working to serve underserved populations, be it in education, providing services, community organizing, or advocacy. As a community servant, I felt that it was important for me to fully understand the concepts attributed to Freire. While the importance of his work is widely acknowledged, accessing and understanding his concepts is not easily accomplished.

Dr. Hughes's mastery of the concepts *and* of novel teaching methods that permit students to gain insights within the time frame of a semester's course is both amazing and a testament to her extraordinary skills as an educator.

I believe that my personal evaluation is consistent with those of the students that I know who were taking the class that I sat in on for several weeks. We all came away from weekly classes energized and eager to gain more insights into complex issues and concepts related to race, diversity, and education. There is no doubt that the excellence of her instruction is due to thoughtful course development that merges a strong knowledge base, an outstanding conceptual framework for teaching, and an innovative teaching style. Combining these factors with the significant impact she has on her students, I would **rank the learning outcomes of her classes as excellent**.

Service - A review of Dr. Hughes's Statement of Service indicates significant service to a multitude of campus, local community, state, and national entities, which supports the **ranking of her as excellent in service**. While academe often defines service to national organizations in terms of self-promotional activities, e.g., leadership positions in national professional societies, the contribution that Dr. Hughes makes to national organizations are above and beyond the self-promotional and result in significant impact on organizational goal attainment and, most importantly, on students in K-20 throughout the country.

The list of the many organizations that she serves or has served is too extensive to include in this letter, so I refer the reader to her *Curriculum Vitae* and Statement of Service. I would like to emphasize that a **unique and important service activity** was her being a co-establisher of a new scholarly journal, The Journal for the Study of Sports and Athletics in Education. A few of our colleagues at IUPUI may become section editors or primary editors of professional journals, but it is rare for a colleague on this campus, to have served the academic community by starting up a new journal. The fact that this journal, co-founded by Dr. Hughes, has existed for seven years bodes well for its longevity. It fills a niche that is clearly expanding.

Little known on campus is the fact that the Multicultural Center owes much of its existence to the foundation laid by an ad hoc group of faculty and staff that met over the period of a year *before* the Black Student Initiative and before the formal planning committees were named by the Chancellor. I was part of that visionary group and it was there that I first met and came to know Dr. Hughes. It was immediately clear that Robin was a driving force that moved forward the committee's conceptualization of a multicultural center at IUPUI. While I will not speak to the resistance that IUPUI administration erected that impeded more timely establishment of a multicultural center, I can say that without the Black Student Initiative and the foundational work done by that ad hoc faculty-staff group, the multicultural center may not have come about. The vision for the center that was solidified by the ad hoc group was subsequently transferred to the formal, Multicultural Concept Development Committee and finally implemented by yet another, Chancellor appointed, committee. Robin's involvement from the initial conceptualization stage was key to the establishment of the Multicultural Center that now serves many students.

Dr. Hughes was also a very active and key member of a group that advocated for the retention of Dr. Khaula Murtadha's expertise and leadership on this campus after she resigned her

position as Executive Associate Dean of the School of Education. Without that advocacy, IUPUI would have lost one of its most visionary, expert, and impactful administrator-leaders. Without Robin's service to the advocacy group, success in their endeavors would have been less probable.

The establishment in 2010 of the Equity Institute on Race, Culture and Transformative Action (Equity Institute) owes much to the vision that Dr. Hughes and two of her colleagues provided. Without their hard work to provide service to the university, the reality of the Equity Institute would not have come to fruition. Already, the existence of the Equity Institute is creating a "buzz" in the local community, which bodes well for the Institute becoming a recognized and important resource. Again, Robin was a key person who served the university by establishing the foundations for the establishment of the Equity Institute.

While **the list of campus, local, state, and national service activities of Dr. Hughes is very impressive and reflect significant service**, I felt compelled to mention Robin's service contributions described in the preceding three paragraphs, since they were less visible, mentioned in passing if at all in the Statement of Service and CV, and may seem less "prestigious" than the service activities that are listed and discussed. Personally, however, those three contributions have made major, beneficial impacts on the campus community and are just as important as her other, more recognized and formally described, service contributions.

In conclusion, I strongly and with the highest enthusiasm support the awarding of Dr. Hughes with the Chancellor's Diversity Scholars Award. She has exhibited excellence in her diversity-related activities in the domains of scholarship and service making her most deserving of the Award. I personally owe her a debt of gratitude for all that she has taught me and for setting the example of one who serves the university in support of important diversity-related aspects of the university mission. If you have any questions about my comments or would like further information, please feel free to contact me.

Respectfully,

David A. Suzuki, Ph.D.
Director, Equity Institute on Race, Culture and Transformative Action
Professor, IU School of Medicine