IUPUI
Department of Psychology
SCHOOL OF SCIENCE
A Purdue University School
Indianapolis

January 4, 2011

Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching Selection Committee
Faculty Appointments and Advancement
Office of Academic Affairs
Administration Building, Room 126

Dear Selection Committee Members:

I am pleased to write a letter in support of Dr. Robert Bringle's candidacy for the 2011 Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching. Although Dr. Bringle has taught Introductory Psychology and the Capstone Laboratory in Social Psychology consistently during my tenure at IUPUI, I have not directly observed or engaged in a peer review of Dr. Bringle's teaching. However, I can certainly comment on the pivotal role that Dr. Bringle has played in devising and implementing improvements to our undergraduate curricula during the past two decades. I can also attest to the effects of his leadership in the domain of service learning on course offerings in my department.

Dr. Bringle clearly has demonstrated excellence in teaching in accordance with the typical metrics – a sustained track record of very positive student satisfaction ratings and evidence of good mentoring, an internationally-recognized program of funded research and published scholarship related to teaching and to service learning (including a book published by the American Psychological Association) and a distinguished legacy of administrative leadership that has culminated in IUPUI being widely recognized for its excellence in the domains of service learning and civic engagement. Within my department, Dr. Bringle was a key partner (in collaboration with Dr. John Kremer) in restructuring the way that Introductory Psychology was taught in the 1990s. Under his leadership, the course evolved from a format in which students were lectured to in very large groups, to the current 'hybrid' model whereby students meet in relatively small recitation sections facilitated by an instructor well-versed in active learning pedagogies, along with videotape and computer-supported enhancements that facilitate content mastery and assessment. This model is still in place nearly 20 years later. It is noteworthy that although we are in the midst of a curricular review and revision, there are no plans to alter these fundamental pedagogical elements that Dr. Bringle helped to shape. It is also significant that Dr. Bringle continues to teach Introductory Psychology and to provide input to textbook revisions through the Course Coordinator, despite his heavy administrative load.

Dr. Bringle and Dr. John Kremer also collaborated on a project (funded through the National Science Foundation) to transform advanced research training within the Psychology major. In the SPUR (Social Psychological Undergraduate Research) project, students worked throughout the summer to complete an independent research project in psychology – a process that is essentially

LD 124 402 N. Blackford Street Indianapolis, IN 46202-3275 (317) 274-4930 fax (317) 274-6756

prerequisite to graduate-level training in any subdiscipline of Psychology. Dr. Bringle's program predated campus-level programming related to summer research opportunities for undergraduate students and clearly provided a model for subsequent initiatives in my own department. Indeed I currently teach the Capstone Honors Seminar in psychology to 12-15 students per year who work in the laboratories of faculty mentors from the summer before the senior year through their final two semesters. The basic elements of this research experience were present in the model conceived by Dr. Bringle, and I believe that it is quite significant that his efforts in the area of undergraduate research training have persisted for nearly 30 years.

I believe that Dr. Bringle's work on service learning represents the most salient example of how his professional efforts in teaching have built upon his experience in other educational endeavors and ultimately transformed the instructional climate at IUPUI. Dr. Bringle has published extensively in this area, been recognized internationally, and helped to mentor emerging leaders in this field (including doctoral students on our own campus). As an IUPUI instructor who has developed two service learning courses (B340, Cognitive Psychology; B310, Life-span Development) and participated as a Faculty Fellow in Service Learning, I can personally attest to how impactful Dr. Bringle's leadership efforts have been in my department. Participating in these initiatives has helped me to develop partnerships with community members that have helped spawn subsequent research collaborations. I have become connected to colleagues from across campus that share my enthusiasm for helping students to enhance their mastery of course objectives through applications to real-world problems encountered through service, and my students have been deeply appreciative of the opportunities to develop skills as well as connections with community partners. IUPUI's diverse portfolio of opportunities to engage in service learning – from typical service learning courses, to trips abroad to engage in international service, to one-time service learning experiences in learning communities and campus 'days of service' -reflects Dr. Bringle's creativity as a leader. He has been adept at creating institutional mechanisms that have systematically transformed the culture of the campus and enhanced its connections to the metropolitan Indianapolis region. For these many reasons, I sincerely hope that you will consider very seriously Dr. Bringle's candidacy for the Chancellor's Excellence in Teaching Award.

Sincerely,

Kathy E. Johnson, Ph.D.
Professor and Chair
Department of Psychology