

July 5, 2023

Dear SPaRC Committee:

I am delighted to support the nomination of Michelle Ward, Assistant Director Award Management at our Sponsored Programs Administration, for the SPaRC Outstanding Service Award.

Over the last few years, I have utilized Michelle's knowledge for many post award questions. She consistently provides quick and accurate information with a smile. Most of our communication is over the phone or zoom, where her laugh is contagious, and she is a joy to work with. Having worked in the same office years ago, I know Award Management is a non-stop workload with many hours burning both ends of the candle. While working many hours overseeing her awards she also supervises a team, attends many meetings, and finds time to also present for SPaRC 'Ed and National conferences. Just for this reason alone she earns the **Outstanding Service** recognition.

Michelle and I have teamed up to present the SPaRC'Ed Award Management and the Lifecycle course a few times as instructors. During these occasions she keeps everyone accountable for their participation in the presentation, finds the time to always keep our slides updated, and provides new updates relevant to the course. There was one time where she mentored a new presenter who was nervous and new to speaking in public...this is when Michelle shines. She encouraged her colleague and met separately with them to make certain they were ready for our presentation. This is just one example of how Michelle provides **Outstanding Service** to her colleagues, her team, and research administration overall.

Michelle and I have never worked in the same office; however, I would consider her a teammate who I can always count on. It does take a special person to provide the **Outstanding Service** she does while still doing her day-to-day responsibilities.

I encourage the SPaRC committee to see what an asset Michelle is and what she brings to research administration. In this new culture of hybrid and remote settings, her laughter, her encouragement, and her ongoing efforts to provide exceptional service should be recognized.

Best Regards,

*Tamara Roosevelt*

NCSA Proposal Development Office - Lead



## COLLEGE OF APPLIED HEALTH SCIENCES

Office of the Dean  
110 Huff Hall, MC-586  
1206 S. Fourth St.  
Champaign, IL 61820

July 24, 2023

Dear SPaRC committee,

I am pleased to be writing a letter of support for Michelle Ward's nomination for the SPaRC Outstanding Service award.

As an Assistant Dean for Budget and Business in the College of Applied Health Sciences, I have run the post award side of grants in the college for the past 18 years. I can state that this work involves many intricacies in order to understand the full scope and administration of each of our awards. While doing my work, I have had the pleasure to work with Michelle Ward on our AHS grants.

Michelle is an absolute pleasure to work with. She is solution oriented which is very important since most of the issues we face involves a resolution. She is able to present facts of the award and goes the extra mile to check budgets and scopes when suggesting possible resolutions. I am usually in the nuts and bolts of a situation, and this type of assistance greatly benefits the issue so I can discuss the facts. I just had a grant a few weeks ago with a Faculty member leaving, grant ended, grant transferring to another unit, balance unspent, and work still to complete. She was able to get the two faculty members on the same page, and map out a solution that would allow the work to completion.

Michelle is also someone who I have come to rely on over the years just to discuss grant theory or to ask a odd ball question every now and again. She is a collaborator and I appreciate this. SPA is lucky to have a knowledgeable and professional employee as Michelle on staff, and we are grateful to get her help.

Thank you for the opportunity to support Michelle for this nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Liz Clawson'.

Liz Clawson  
Assistant Dean of Budget and Strategic Business Operations  
College of Applied Health Sciences



## THE GRAINGER COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

Engineering Business Services Center  
2250 Digital Computer Laboratory, MC-279  
1304 W. Springfield Avenue  
Urbana, IL 61801

July 27, 2023

Dear Selection Committee:

I am writing in support of the nomination of Michelle Ward for the SPaRC Outstanding Service award. I've had the pleasure of working with Michelle for over seven (7) years in two distinct capacities; the first was as a SPA colleague and now as a department contact.

The qualities that I appreciate most about Michelle are her vibrant energy and the positive outlook that she maintains despite the challenges and "grind" that exist in research administration. She presents in an open and welcoming manner, which fosters discussion and sometimes debate, which ultimately results in solutions being identified for the situations encountered. She is responsive to questions, actively listens and shares her wisdom and experiences with stakeholders / customers to ensure there is common understanding while working to identify the next, best step to take. Through her actions, Michelle builds and maintains strong working relationships with her colleagues and customers. Her personality and positive outlook allow her to work effectively and efficiently with some of the more challenging customers on campus.

In short, the research community at the University of Illinois is lucky to have her as part of the grant lifecycle.

Kind regards,

**Missy Beck-LeFaivre**

Associate Director, Grants and Contracts

Engineering Business Services Center ("EBSC")

P: 217-244-0878 | Email: [mbeckle@illinois.edu](mailto:mbeckle@illinois.edu)

July 25, 2023

RE: SPaRC Outstanding Service Award Nomination for Michelle Ward

Dear 2023 SPaRC Retreat Committee:

I nominate Michelle Ward, Assistant Director, Non-Federal Awards with Sponsored Programs Administration (SPA) for the SPaRC Outstanding Service Award. Michelle exemplifies dedicated leadership and service to the Illinois research community, spanning from her February 2015 start as department research administrator with the Illinois Center for Transportation and throughout her eight plus years of sponsored programs support to the University of Illinois. In mid-2016, she joined the SPA Award Management team and took on increasing levels of responsibility, quickly advancing to an Assistant Director role in mid-2019 to oversee a staff and award portfolio. Michelle provides outstanding service in all areas, and most notably through her strong customer focus, emphasis on education and outreach, advanced expertise, teamwork and continuous improvement, and extraordinary professionalism.

#### **Customer Focus**

Michelle maintains effective, collaborative working relationships with sponsors, departments, and faculty through clear communications and consistently asks clarifying questions to fully understand each request. She has built excellent connections with department and sponsor contacts by altering her style and method to best suit each person and their individual needs. Michelle thoughtfully discusses potentially burdensome award requirements with departments to support compliance and ease tension or concerns. She ensures faculty and unit leadership involvement in elevated issues that impact their awards.

Michelle responds to emails and other requests in an extremely timely manner and assigns appropriate priority to each inquiry. She gives the necessary attention to interactions with international sponsors to overcome potential communication barriers and help meet complex award requirements. Michelle strives to handle all interactions with a positive, collaborative approach. She sets high service-level expectations for her staff and coaches them in best practices to successfully meet customer and stakeholder needs in a timely manner.

#### **Education and Outreach**

Michelle expertly educates others on award management topics and issues across all platforms. She takes an interest in involvement with the research community at large, as evidenced by her work to co-author a published National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA) article in 2019, based on her NCURA conference presentation on post-award report tracking earlier that year. Michelle regularly supports SPA outreach and training and served just this past year as a SPaRC'Ed instructor, SPaRC Quarterly Meeting presenter, and SPaRC Retreat breakout session facilitator. Furthermore, she encourages and mentors her team and other staff to take the lead in ongoing education efforts, as well.

## **Expertise**

Michelle serves as a highly trusted expert in the post-award administration of both domestic and international private awards. She capably interprets and navigates the most complicated award terms and administrative considerations. Michelle has an especially strong ability to quickly learn sponsor requirements and navigate electronic systems, both internal and external to the University. Even early in her SPA career, she quickly grasped the nuances of her sponsor assignment, rose to the challenge of significant assignment changes, and directly assisted SPA leaders with information and the management of sensitive award issues.

Michelle employs extremely advanced problem-solving skills and successfully resolves all issues to the constant satisfaction of sponsors and departments. She easily prioritizes incoming tasks as needed and displays excellent discernment on how to resolve issues as they arise. Michelle capably manages both her own complex workload of private sponsors and all elevated issues within her team's assignment. She actively develops her staff to expand their ability to manage especially sensitive and complex administrative requirements. Michelle involves her staff in cross-training opportunities, to best meet service-level needs, ensure even coverage, and encourage professional growth. Thus, she continually builds on an already strong base of collective research administration knowledge and expertise.

## **Teamwork and Continuous Improvement**

Michelle actively collaborates with other SPA leaders and staff to enhance department and sponsor interactions with SPA. She regularly serves on working groups and committees to improve research administration guidance and procedures. Michelle eagerly takes on additional assignments during staffing challenges to help maintain consistently high service levels. She anticipates research community needs and actively volunteers herself in ways to meet them. Michelle successfully leverages existing tools and technology to serve departments in the most efficient manner possible and explores the use of new applications and functions to best meet sponsor and administrative requirements. She also prioritizes opportunities to expand her own knowledge and abilities, such as through completion of numerous NCURA webinars and the Illinois Supervisory Skills Program.

## **Professionalism**

Michelle displays exceptional professionalism and dependability in all areas of her work. She is highly trusted by others to handle each task or scenario with the necessary importance and sensitivity. Michelle makes time to consider the effort needed for each task, create a plan, and work ahead to meet sponsored research deadlines and priorities. She provides regular follow-up and completes highly accurate work. Michelle treats everyone with respect and promotes positive interactions within the research administration community.

Please consider Michelle for this significant honor. She embodies outstanding service and serves as an ambassador for sponsored programs at the University of Illinois in the many ways represented above and countless more. I fully recommend Michelle for this award.

Sincerely,



Alison G. Morgan  
Associate Director, Non-Federal Awards  
Sponsored Programs Administration