

July 26, 2023

SPaRC Award Nomination for Outstanding Service Committee

To Whom it May Concern,

It is a pleasure to enthusiastically support Mikel Storm's nomination for the SPaRC Award for Outstanding Service. Mikel is the Senior Facility Security Officer responsible for our Special Research Facility (SRF) in the Security Management Office. The presence of the SRF allows the University to receive and protect information subject to classification, conduct national security-related research at Illinois, and greatly enhances research opportunities beyond open science. The SRF includes our Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility (SCIF), a specialized environment for handling this information. In addition, the SRF allows direct communication on topics that are sensitive or subject to national security. It was established over the last six years under Mikel's leadership. With the closest SCIF located hours away, it has become a regional magnet for numerous stakeholders in the national security and defense sectors.

Since joining in 2016, Mikel has managed the certification of the SRF, assisted with personnel security clearances, facilitated classified contracts, and promoted collaboration with other cleared facilities, federal agencies, and national labs. He is responsible for continuous operations of the SRF in support of the national security needs of our investigators and their sponsored projects. As a veteran and member of the U.S. national reserve, who was called up to serve in an Afghanistan combat zone for over a year – during the pandemic, Mikel well knows how important our contributions from UIUC can greatly impact national security. As such, he is fully vested in implementing the vision for our SRF and SCIF.

Mikel has contributed greatly to convening and shepherding University administrators, campus research leaders, and our sponsor, the U.S. Army Construction Engineering Research Laboratory (CERL), to build and expand our research programs relating to national security, a critical component of our research mission. Thanks to Mikel's dedicated efforts, Illinois has navigated complex barriers to launch and accredit the SRF, as well to obtain secure communications capabilities. Mikel tirelessly prepared justifications and built the necessary relationships with those in the federal sector who could approve and provide UIUC with these capabilities. As a result of his success, Illinois' world-class faculty provides solutions to national security challenges faced by federal sponsors, U.S. industry and the intelligence community. Our faculty, staff, and students can pursue challenging problems in the service of national defense and security without journeying to or residing at distant federal facilities.

Consistent with our campus culture, Mikel is adept at introducing researchers in diverse areas to the opportunities presented by the SRF. He patiently trains and advises on the use of the facility and has been largely responsible for significant growth in its user community. Mikel's support for the involvement of students in classified research provides valuable expertise and builds a ready-made workforce with clearance as they graduate and transition seamlessly for employment in the national security community.

Thanks to Mikel's leadership, Illinois is now recognized as one of a small number of universities across the nation with a Special Research Facility accredited to operate at the highest level of national security. I urge that his extraordinary contributions are recognized with the SPaRC Award for Outstanding Service.

Sincerely,



Susan A. Martinis
Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation

28 July 2023

RE: SPaRC Award Nomination for Outstanding Service
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

To Whom It May Concern:

I have known Mikel Storm since 2017 and as a professional colleague since 2019. During these past four years-plus, Mikel and I have worked closely together through our responsibilities with the University's Security Management Office (SMO). While the position Mikel serves is unique and there are no similar positions at UIUC, I do know many other individuals who serve in such a capacity at other universities across the nation. Simply stated, Mikel is exemplary in the field of national security, so recognized by his peers and is an invaluable asset to the University of Illinois. His combination of military service, work ethic, and nonstop drive for the University of Illinois national security programs and facilities to be the best of the best, enable Mikel's performance to be considered stellar by any measure.

I am pleased to further comment on the following areas of focus:

Work – Mikel is constantly seeking ways to improve the University's SMO. Be it protocols, more efficient processes for our university personnel or structural improvements to the secured facility, there is not a week passes in which Mikel is not seeking progress.

Self-Improvement – The national security environment is often siloed environments and building one's knowledge and awareness requires self-starts. I see firsthand Mikel constantly researching various domains, reaching out to experts in various fields and otherwise expanding his expertise. He does so always in the best interests of those who are served by the SMO.

Initiative & Creativity – Mikel has a unique characteristic of continually asking himself (and me, others) how to achieve certain enhancements, new programs, etc. The University's secured facility enhancements over the past several years are a clear result of Mikel's ingenuity, and passion.

Enhancing Reputation – The University of Illinois SMO's excellence is recognized at UIUC and at state and national levels. With the SMO operating under the U.S. Department of Defense and Defense Intelligence Agency, *earned reputation* is critically important. Our office continually receives high praise from federal and other officials for what has been developed at the University of Illinois. This reputation *would not have been possible* if it had not been for Mikel's steadfast dedication.

I am thrilled to support Mikel's nomination and I would be happy to provide additional information.

Sincerely,

Kraig

Kraig A. Wagenecht

Senior Director, External Research Partnerships