

Name: Christa Ludeking  
Working Title: Graduate Coordinator  
Payroll Title: STDT SVC ADVISOR 2

Dear Award Committee:

I write to enthusiastically recommend Christa Ludeking for UCSD's Exemplary Employee of the Year Award. Christa is the Graduate Coordinator for Ethnic Studies, one of the most successful and diverse programs on campus. Ethnic Studies faculty strongly believe she deserves this honor for exceptional contributions under a number of the award criteria.

#### Innovation and Proactive Leadership

Christa is proactive in drawing faculty attention to potential funding opportunities for students. She takes the extra steps of sending reminders to faculty about nomination deadlines, providing detailed information about required materials, and reaching out to students directly to apprise them of fellowship and grant opportunities that are related to their doctoral research. The ethnic studies department is made up of 97% students of color, so this tailored support and outreach significantly impacts the recruitment and retention of graduate students of color in the social sciences, which make up roughly 13% of the graduate student population.

#### Build relationships/partnerships

Graduate students often comment that Christa's extraordinary support as an advisor, advocate, and mentor has played a crucial role in their success at UCSD. Our most vulnerable students in particular have attributed Christa's patient provision of resources and advocacy as crucial to their retention at UCSD as they have weathered medical, familial, and financial crises. She has also proven incredibly attentive to the diversity of our student population, whether it be adopting correct pronouns for our gender non-conforming students, meeting the dietary needs of our diverse religious population, and taking seriously the challenges that our students face by providing them with ongoing resources, guidance, and a listening ear.

#### Support university practices, procedures and policies

As the former DGS Professor Kirstie Dorr affirms, "Christa has proven to be an invaluable resource to and source of support for the Director of Graduate Studies." Whether it be providing leadership in the form of creating training guides, letter templates, and one-on-one mentorship; taking the initiative to forward monthly calendar updates and reminders regarding important events or deadlines; or co-authoring lengthy, time-sensitive reports such as our block grant review or curriculum revision, Christa's exemplary commitment to supporting and improving the quotidian and long-term administrative functions of our graduate program has yielded exceptional results.

In the past few years alone, she has: 1) aided the creation, approval, and implementation of a curriculum revision that has reduced staffing burdens, improved student and faculty intellectual morale, and streamlined students' time to degree; 2) coordinated an external review and worked to implement the suggested changes in order to improve departmental morale and student satisfaction with the program; and 3) aided in the recruitment and retention of over nearly thirty underrepresented minority students, many of whom are queer and women. Essential to this work has been her "open-door" policy in which she makes herself accessible to our graduate students on a daily basis, and advocates for them in their accessing of affordable housing, health care, parental and medical leave, and funding opportunities. Many of our students have commented that Christa has played a crucial role in their success at UCSD.

Her outstanding skills and depth of knowledge really shone through in the ways she handled recent dealt changes in the Graduate Division and shifts in processes, particularly the recent announcement of a mid-year move to 50% funding for graduate students. Christa has been an informed, calm and steady voice in helping the department to understand and negotiate this change. She provided a clear analysis of the ways it might impact our graduate program and also worked with graduate students who had concerns.

#### Inclusive Excellence

As the preceding indicates, Christa has made exceptional contributions to inclusive excellence, with an emphasis on both words. Recent reviewers of our graduate program argued that we are "one of the most established and well-known departments in the country, distinguished by a renowned faculty and by graduates who are known for being at the forefront of knowledge production in the field." The department, they concluded, is "held in high regard by colleagues around the country," with "a national reputation as a

pathbreaking graduate program.” Our graduate program is not only the most diverse on campus, but it is remarkably successful, with an approximately 92% placement rate. Christa’s above and beyond the call of duty commitment to recruiting and retaining excellent diverse graduate students is one of the major reasons for success.

Ethnic Studies faculty praise Christa’s performance in the highest terms. Department Chair Dayo Gore writes that Christa is “invaluable source of knowledge about a host of issues from union contracts, to fellowships and fees and cost of graduate jobs and provides such information in a thoughtful and detailed way.” As Professor and former Director of Graduate Studies Shelley Streeby writes, “In my 25 years of working at UCSD, Christa is by far the most outstanding Graduate Coordinator I have worked with.” In my last review of Christa’s performance, I similarly noted “that In almost 25 years in academia Christa is the very best staff person with whom I’ve ever worked.”

In short, Christa Ludeking constantly exceeds our expectations, and expectations of the UC system. Her brilliance as an administrator, student advocate and advisor is unparalleled. She thus sets standard for exemplary staff member.

Sincerely,

Curtis Marez  
Professor and DGUS