

December 5, 2010

Patricia Dolan Mullen, DrPH  
Chair, Faculty Tenure & Promotion Committee  
The University of Texas School of Public Health  
7000 Fannin, UCT Suite 2522  
Houston, TX 77030

RE: Alanna C. Morrison, PhD

Dear Dr. Mullen:

It is a pleasure to write in support of tenure for Alanna C. Morrison, PhD, Associate Professor of Epidemiology, Human Genetics & Environmental Sciences in the School of Public Health. I have known Alanna for over five years, initially through my work with Eric Boerwinkle and activities related to several NHLBI-funded projects, particularly CARE and CHARGE. Most recently, I have had much more interaction with Alanna through the NHLBI Exome Sequencing Project, as she is one of the critically important collaborator/coinvestigator on the project that I lead focused on cardiovascular disease (HeartGO).

I am the Harrison Professor of Public Health Sciences, Vice-Chair of the Department of Public Health Sciences within the University of Virginia School of Medicine, and Director of the Center for Public Health Genomics at the University of Virginia. As the University of Virginia does not have a School of Public Health, the Department of Public Health Sciences provides much of the teaching and research support in epidemiology, biostatistics, clinical informatics and health policy. In a similar manner, the Center for Public Health Genomics represents the focus of human genomics, statistical genetics, genetic epidemiology and bioinformatics for the University of Virginia.

I mention above that I am the Principal Investigator of a component (HeartGO) of the NHLBI-funded Exome Sequencing Project (ESPGO), an ARRA-funded project that proposes to use exome sequencing (DNA sequencing of the coding regions [exons] of the human genome) in extensively characterized cohorts to identify single nucleotide variants (SNVs) associated with phenotypes in heart, lung and blood disorders. The ESPGO is composed of five components – two exome sequencing centers (Broad Institute and the University of Washington) and three cohort consortia (including HeartGO). HeartGO is composed of six well-phenotyped NHLBI cohorts – ARIC, CARDIA, CHS, Framingham Heart Study, Jackson Heart Study and MESA. Within HeartGO, Alanna represents ARIC but, at the same time, has provided much more effort and leadership than most participants. As others, Alanna attends and participates in our weekly HeartGO conference calls and contributes to the discussion on science and logistics. At the same time, she has enabled the translation of key phenotypic data from the cohorts to the HeartGO coordination sites for relating DNA samples with phenotypic data and with exome sequence data, all to be assembled within dbGaP. She further contributes to the discussions of analysis of exome sequence data (a rapidly evolving and complex field) as it relates to the phenotypes of importance for cardiovascular disease. Further, Alanna has taken the lead of forming a writing group to address the role of SNVs with measures of hemostatic variables, those key biomarkers of cardiovascular disease.

During my academic career at the University of Minnesota (14 years), Wake Forest University (12 years) and (currently) the University of Virginia, I have served on Promotion and Tenure Committees at each of those institutions. The timing of tenure (whether coupled with promotion or separate) differs from place to place; however, the fundamental requirements for tenure are consistent with those of the University of Texas. I have personal knowledge of Alanna Morrison's work through collaborative projects, have reviewed her CV and Career Summary, and have had interactions with her at meetings. Based upon these sources of information, I can clearly state that Alanna

Stephen S. Rich, Ph.D.  
Professor and Director

Patrick Concannon, Ph.D.  
Professor and Associate Director

Michèle M. Sale, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor

Josyf C. Mychaleckyj, M.A., D. Phil.  
Associate Professor

Wei-Min Chen, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor

Charles R. Farber, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor

Aaron J. Mackey, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor

Ani Manichaikul, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor

Suna Öngüt-Gümüşcü, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor

Aaron R. Quinlan, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor

Sharon Teraoka, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor

Uma Nyak, Ph.D.  
Instructor

Morrison meets all criteria for the award of tenure. This recommendation is based upon (1) excellence in research, (2) commitment to teaching, (3) service to the department and institution, and (4) national and international reputation.

There are obvious metrics that attest to Alanna's achievement in the area of research, including number of peer-reviewed publications (39), her position as first/senior author (15) and their impact on the field. Alanna has shown high levels of funding throughout her career, including the ability to obtain independent R01 support (with an active R01 on hypertension). Examples of her national and international reputation are reviewing (journals and grants), editorial board activity and presentations at seminars and meetings. Alanna, as many faculty in a School of Public Health, has a significantly greater teaching and advising load than those in Schools of Medicine. It is clear that Alanna takes this responsibility seriously and she has a growing mentorship load across the University of Texas (not just in the SPH).

I want to emphasize that there is much to be admired about the role of an outstanding individual faculty who is also an outstanding team player. I view Alanna Morrison as one of those people that not only is outstanding in her own right, but is someone upon whom you can count to contribute to a broader cause and in times of need. I think we all know of "stars" who focus (almost) solely on their work and are loathe to be drawn into tasks that are not specific to their work. They can certainly contribute to the science and stature of an institution yet are not contributing to the overall mission and growth – Alanna is one that you can count upon to continue to grow and to continue to contribute to the mission of the SPH and the University of Texas.

In summary, Alanna Morrison has been shown to be contributing at a high level, based upon her promotion to Associate Professor. She has an outstanding intelligence, a strong work ethic and clear dedication to science and teaching. Based upon her past, I would view her future very positively – she is on a very good trajectory for even better success. It should be obvious that I believe if Alanna Morrison were a candidate for tenure at the University of Virginia, she would receive tenure without concern. My only regret is that she is not on the faculty at the University of Virginia!

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Stephen S Rich". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly informal style.

Stephen S. Rich, Ph.D.  
Harrison Professor and Vice-Chair of Public Health Sciences  
Director, Center for Public Health Genomics