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December 8, 2012

Tenure and Promotion Committee
The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston
School of Public Health

Re: Myriam Fornage, Ph.D. promotion to full professor

Dear Tenure and Promotion Committee:

Dr. Myriam Fornage is seeking promotion to full professor. After review of Dr. Fornage's CV and Tenure and Promotion portfolio, I submit that she has readily met the criteria for promotion per those stated in the guidelines from the UTHSC-H Handbook of Operating Procedures and the UTHSC-H Statement on Scholarship. Below please find my review and comments on Dr. Fornage's professional accomplishments which I believe justify her promotion.

I preface my comments by noting that I have known Dr. Fornage for over a decade now. Our primary association has been through collaborative work on several large, multi-site population-based studies, namely the Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities (ARIC) Study and the Family Blood Pressure Program (GENOA network). Dr. Fornage has served as the principal investigator for the Genetics lab for the ARIC MRI and Neurocognitive Longitudinal study for which I am overall PI, and is leading the genetic and related "omics" work for the renewal of this large scale project. With respect to my title/position at the University of Mississippi Medical Center, I am a professor in the Departments of Medicine (Geriatrics) and Neurology, Guyton Distinguished Professor, and Director of the Memory Impairment and Neurodegenerative Dementia (MIND) Research Center.

Research

Dr. Fornage has established and maintains an internationally recognized research program in the genetics of brain vascular disease and brain aging. As is obvious from her CV, her work has produced numerous publications in high-impact, highly-competitive journals and an impressive, multi-million dollar portfolio of NIH-funded grants, including her impressive leadership as PI of the CARDIA genetics laboratory. The number and quality of Dr. Fornage's publications are impressive in their own right, even more so however when one takes into account that most of these stem from large multi-site investigations that commonly require 3 or more years for data collection alone. Perhaps less obvious to those outside of this field, but even more remarkable in my opinion, is the breadth and integration of Dr. Fornage's research. Her work has progressively and successfully integrated molecular genetics, population-based epidemiological research, and animal work. This is a rare ability and attests to Dr. Fornage's unique vision, scholarship, and industry. Her work brings well-deserved admiration from colleagues and recognition to herself and UTHSC-H.

Dr. Fornage's research has been and remains on the leading edge of the field. Her work, particularly that on the genetic determinants of subclinical cerebrovascular disease (which in her most recent funding is extended to include clinical endpoints of dementia and cognitive decline), has profound implications for health care in our rapidly graying society. Her consistent track record of NIH support is a commendable achievement and a salient indicator of her work's priority and relevance.

Harder to represent on a CV, but worth noting here, are the strong relationships and leadership that Dr. Fornage has established between UTHSC-H and researchers at academic medical centers across the US and Europe. Cultivating and maintaining collaborative relationships across institutions, as Dr. Fornage has done on several NIH-funded projects and notably her leadership in multiple consortia (e.g., CHARGE, International Stroke Genetics, CARE, and PAGE), is tremendously time-consuming and requires a rare combination of interpersonal and professional skills. Her talents and perseverance in this area have afforded her access to minority populations (including African Americans and Mexican Americans), and thereby have established an invaluable resource not only for Dr. Fornage's program but also to the direct benefit of her trainees and collaborators at UTHSC-H. Because of the many unique resources she has had the foresight to develop (such as stored DNA, RNA and transformed cell lines) and her strong collaborative ties across academic centers, including some with large minority populations, her continued high level of NIH support seems assured.

Teaching

Dr. Fornage is an active educator and fully engaged mentor. She lectures regularly for several graduate courses, developed and teaches a course on neuroepidemiology, and provides a number of ongoing lectures for post-docs and other trainees. She has served as a regular mentor to graduate students, participates on advisory committees, and serves as primary advisor for practicum rotations and MPH thesis. Appropriately, she also provides supervision and mentorship to post-docs and junior faculty. Given her primary focus as a researcher, her level of involvement in teaching seems appropriate. Teaching quality scores were not included in the promotion packet, however, having seen Dr. Fornage present at national meetings, I have no doubt she is an excellent lecturer, and an enthusiastic and committed mentor.

Service

Dr. Fornage is an active scientific citizen at the local, national, and international level. She serves on numerous UTHSC institutional committees. She is an ad hoc peer-reviewer for numerous high-impact journals and serves on the editorial board for Stroke, Translational Stroke Research, and Epidemiology. She is an active leader at the national level on committees within the American Heart Association, and has served as a peer-reviewer for many NIH committees and expert panels. She currently serves on Study Section for the NIH Genetics of Health and Disease. As noted above, Dr. Fornage also holds leadership roles on several large international collaborative consortia (e.g., CHARGE). I can attest first hand that her leadership and expertise are widely recognized and sought after by her colleagues nationally and internationally. She is a driving force behind the productivity these consortia have generated.

In summary, I hold Dr. Fornage's work and expertise in the highest esteem. Taking into account the full scope of her accomplishments across research, teaching, and service, I feel she clearly meets the criteria for promotion outlined in the materials provided. At the University of Mississippi Medical Center, where I have served on the Tenure and Promotion Committee, I can unequivocally state that Dr. Fornage's accomplishments would merit such a promotion. Her work and talents bring well-deserved admiration from colleagues and recognition both to herself and the UTHSC-H.

Please feel free to contact me, if I can provide anything further with respect to Dr. Fornage's review.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Tom Mosley".

Thomas H. Mosley, Jr., Ph.D.
Professor of Medicine (Geriatrics) and Neurology
Guyton Distinguished Professor
Director, Memory Impairment and Neurodegenerative Dementia (MIND) Center