June 7, 2012

Address

Dear Dr. Buekens:

I am pleased to write this enthusiastic letter in my strong support of Dr. Jinying Zhao’s tenure in the Department of Epidemiology at Tulane University. Dr. Zhao is an extremely bright and motivated young scientist. I have been greatly impressed by her academic integrity and achievements. I am a former advisor of Dr. Zhao. Based on my knowledge on Dr. Zhao’s scientific work as well as a thorough review of the materials that you forwarded to me, I am confident in providing a strong recommendation in favor of Dr. Zhao’s tenure

I am a Professor in the Division of Biostatistics and Human Genetics Center at the University of Texas School of Public Health and have been working in the areas of statistical genetics, bioinformatics and computational systems biology.

It is my opinion that Dr. Zhao meets all criteria for the award of tenure. This recommendation is based on (1) excellence in research, (2) commitment in teaching, (3) service to the department and institution, and (4) national and international reputation.

Dr. Zhao has received broad educational training in medicine, molecular cell biology, genetic epidemiology and statistical genetics. She performed and is performing strong and rigorous research. She has published 47 papers in peer reviewed journals. Dr. Zhao localized, for the first time, type 2 diabetes genes onto chromosome 1p36 in Chinese population, a susceptibility region that was later replicated by several independent studies in different populations. She has specific expertise in statistical genetics in developing novel methodologies for genome-wide linakge and association analysis as well as genetic interactions. She has developed several novel statistical methodologies that have been shown to be more powerful and sensitive in detecting major genetic effects as well as gene-gene interactions implicated in human chronic disorders. Her recent work has also included developing new methods for pathway-based genetic association analysis and studying the potential role of epigenetics in the pathogenesis of obesity, diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Her work has led to significant publications in peer reviewed journals and presentations at national and international conferences. One of her presentations won the highly competitive *“*[*Elizabeth Barrett-Connor Research Award for Young Investigators*](http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=1628)*” from* the American Heart Association. Recently, she won another prestigious award, “*Roger R. Williams Memorial Award for Genetic Epidemiology*” presented by the American Heart Association.

Dr. Zhao has also been very successful in developing novel projects and obtaining research funding. Over the past few years, she has secured several millions of funding as PI from NIH, American Heart Association and other funding agencies. Her success in obtaining research funding is extremely impressive during this financial difficult time.

Besides the achievements in scientific research of her fields, Dr. Zhao has also been teaching and mentoring graduate students, postdoctoral fellows and clinical fellows. Over the past years, she has developed two new courses at the graduate level and has also been co-teaching other graduate courses. In addition, she has been actively participating in community services at the local, national and international levels. She served on several NIH review panels as a grant reviewer and has also reviewed numerous articles for peer-reviewed journals.

In summary, Dr. Zhao’s record to date clearly puts her at the top of her peers. She has demonstrated remarkable productivity and achievements in research, teaching and professional services. I am fully confident that her work in the area of cardiovascular genetic epidemiology has been of the highest quality, and her contributions are of highly significant to the scientific community and public health. Based on her successful records and outstanding contributions, she would be awarded tenure at my university and other universities that I am familiar with. I therefore strongly recommend her tenure without any concern. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,

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