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Dear Mr. Stauffer & SEAHO Awards Committee,

It is with great pleasure that I write to support the nomination of James Thomas, Resident Director for Smith Hall and the Global Village at the University of Kentucky, for SEAHO's Providing Educational Advocacy for Cultural Excellence Award. James is one of the first staff members on campus with whom I had the opportunity to work closely when I began my role as Assistant Director of Academic Initiatives. Prior to my arrival this past summer, James had been diligently working on a special orientation for students in the Global Village—a Living Learning Community focused on international and multicultural education and awareness. It was evident to me that James took his students and their experience seriously. As a result, this innovative orientation program was designed to make sure that domestic and international students in the Global Village started the semester off in a strong way.

The Global Village orientation, in addition to the myriad of other programs and services provided by the staff in Smith Hall, has set a tone of inclusivity, exploration, and camaraderie. The bond in Global Village has been visibly strengthened, and the orientation has served to reduce levels of community conflict within the LLC. As a result of forward thinking from James, this program may become a tradition in Global Village and even a model for other Living Learning Communities on our campus.

What is most impressive about James and the Global Village is that the orientation program is not a lone example of creativity, dedication, and service. Rather, I have found James to be deeply invested in the community and unequivocally committed to its success. As the resident director for a 12-month hall, James works with many students outside of the Global Village. He also goes the extra mile to make sure our international residents are safe, comfortable, and cared for. This includes working closely with colleagues in our Office of International Affairs, making himself available to assist with move-in and transition issues, and sacrificing his personal time and resources to prepare holiday meals for his residents who stay on campus over the academic breaks.

Of all the staff who could be working with the Global Village, I cannot imagine it thriving quite so well as it does under the leadership and attention of James Thomas. His deeply held belief in the purpose of the Global Village, his advocacy for international students, and the intentionality behind the multicultural education that takes place in Smith Hall all serve to keep that community strong and vibrant. For these and many other reasons, I believe James Thomas is especially deserving of the SEAHO PEACE Award. Please feel free to contact me if I can provide any further information to support his nomination.

Sincerely,

Marianne Lorensen
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