January 14, 2010

It is with confidence that I recommend Jennifer Wright, Learning and Development Coordinator for Housing and Residence Education, for the SEAHO Jim Grimm New Professional Award.

Jennifer has worked with me since July 13, 2007. Her department, Learning and Development, consists of herself as the Learning and Development Coordinator and a Program Assistant. This department is dedicated to the training and recognition of our professional staff members, a staff of over 320 full-time employees that include professionals, maintenance, custodial, and office support. Because it is an extremely diverse work staff, Jennifer must work closely with area supervisors and management to accomplish what needs to be done. Jennifer often takes on large training projects. For example, her first few months in the job she had to work with our IT staff and administrators to develop training for all full-time employees on the new Microsoft office suite. She must keep a comprehensive and informative orientation program ready for all the various positions and area needs, as well as present Housing departmental policies and procedures to new employees. She assists with planning and presenting large scale recognition ceremonies that have an average attendance of 100 to 250 people. She also writes, updates, and presents class presentations on topics as wide as communication, supervision, and computer education. In addition to her employee development activities, this year she is working with Dr. Kim Fugate on developing Strength’s Training for our students and staff. Jennifer participates on several departmental committees such as the Housing Technology committee and the Housing Safety committee. She is also active in the Superior Accomplishment Award committee and co-chairs the Divisional Student Affairs Employee Enrichment and Development committee.

During this time, I have observed Jennifer demonstrate maturity and sound judgment while interacting with others. She has developed a deep commitment to help people, is active in various university and Housing activities and is a dependable individual. Jennifer has a very clear perception of what she needs to accomplish and pursues her goals with commendable vigor and diligence. Over this past year I observed that when there is a need for training or implementing a special project, our supervisors go to Jennifer, especially when it has anything to do with technology. Jennifer helps supervisors develop presentations using PowerPoint, establish budgets and reports in Excel, and helps staff with many other software questions and projects. She is extremely organized and has very strong communication and leadership skills.

I also witnessed Jennifer’s leadership abilities when she hired a new program assistant. Together they have built a very strong work team and accomplish many tasks with excellence and creativity. For example, they are putting together the fall training schedule that is diverse and provides something for every staff throughout the division, as well as provides opportunities for many of our professional staff to present. Jennifer has expanded learning opportunities to other departments in Student Affairs because they often call her for assistance and have requested to start attending many of our computer courses. Jennifer just completed a very large project for our assistant vice president in coordinating employee satisfaction data from two surveys that covered over four years. She prepared the data to be presented at two leadership assembly presentations. The presentations she developed became a very meaningful communication tool and learning initiative for not only our supervisors, but also for our employees. This project has helped our supervisors improve morale, communication, and teamwork in their immediate work areas.

In addition to her responsibilities at UF, Jennifer is very active in her community volunteering each week with the Gainesville Community Ministries. She is very active in working with a group to aid the homeless and those living in the Porter's Quarters neighborhood. She volunteers many evenings each month serving dinner to the homeless in the courtyard at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, and works with quarterly vision clinics, enabling those who don't have vision coverage to get free eye appointments and prescription lenses.

One attribute I admire most about Jennifer is her ability to continue to have a positive attitude and a drive to succeed, regardless of the obstacles that come her way. What makes Jennifer unique is not that she had done one great thing; rather, it is all the many small things she does in such a great way that makes her successful. Whether it is helping employees or students learn new computer software applications, taking on new projects, participating on an important committee, or planning for a large annual awards program, Jennifer gets the job done. Her determination and devotion to help others has been most praiseworthy. I am confident Jennifer will provide a high level of efficiency and integrity wherever she works and whatever she does. She well deserves the recognition of her outstanding contributions to our students and to our employees.

Sincerely,

Joella Seay, Assistant Director

University Of Florida

Department of Housing & Residence Education