December 16, 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my honor to nominate Justin Long for the James C. Grimm Outstanding New Professional in Housing/Residence Life Award. Justin has worked at The University of Southern Mississippi since July 2006, directly after his graduation from the University of Central Arkansas. He began his employment with our department as a Residence Life Coordinator working with our Year 2 Initiative program for sophomore success. He served in this capacity for a year and a half and was promoted to an Assistant Director for Assignments and Student Relations.

As a residence life coordinator Justin worked with about 350 upper-class students in a co-educational facility. He built the sophomore year experience program from the ground up and developed it into the successful program it is today. The retention rate of the students who participated in the program was above 85% which is significantly higher than the overall retention rate of the university. Students in the program also gained the opportunity to serve as a mentor to students who would participate in the program in future years.

In his current role as an assistant director Justin works with our assignments and room change processes, student recruitment at campus preview events, supervises the payroll process, and serves as a customer service agent working with parent and student concerns and coordinating and supervising the front office. He has made tremendous gains in improving the customer service in our department. He serves as a liaison with parents who have concerns and he serves as a troubleshooter many times.

Justin and his assignment team have re-vamped the assignments and room change process to increase the satisfaction of the students, as exhibited by our EBI survey results. Additionally, assignments are going out earlier and many of the students choose to self-assign. Roommate pairings are given out quicker and relationships are developed prior to the students arriving at Southern Miss. As a result of a more stream-lined assignments process, we were at 100% occupancy in the fall, our numbers were at a 20 year high, and we have maintained that occupancy, especially in our male populations.

Tremendous gains have also been made in our customer service efforts. The front office has undergone a physical change in appearance and layout and our staffing has been changed to better address the needs of students and their parents. Customer service training has been implemented and there is a high level of accountability in Justin’s staff. These changes have been instrumental, not only in retention but in improving relationships with residence life throughout the university community as well.

As a professional, Justin has a strong appreciation for and understanding of the residence education and the operations processes of our residence life department. As a person who is able to see the “whole” picture and how both processes are interdependent, Justin has managed to tweak processes so they will work well for everyone.

Justin is also the type of person who is very passionate about what he does. He has a great appreciation for diversity and is always willing to work to educate students in that area. Justin has worked with House Calls, an academic partnership program that takes place in the fall, and is working to build bridges between student affairs and the academic community. Although this is only Justin’s third year as a professional staff member, he has already advanced into a mid-level position. He strives to always go above and beyond and his actions that are well beyond the scope of his experiential learning curve. Justin is a pleasure to have on staff and it is a privilege to know and work with him. He has the greatest potential to excel in the housing profession of anyone I have worked with in the past or present, and therefore, I nominate him for this award without hesitation. If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at [Stephanie.roy@usm.edu](mailto:Stephanie.roy@usm.edu) or at 601-266-4783.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Roy

Associate Director of Residence Life

The University of Southern Mississippi