January 8, 2010

Dear SEAHO Award Review Committee:

Please accept this letter of recommendation for Justin Koonz, a Coordinator of Residence Life in his second year of employment at KSU, and in his first professional role in residence life. Justin began demonstrating his commitment to our field before he even arrived at KSU. Justin joined KSU in June 2008, and wanted to attend RELI immediately. Since he hasn't even started working when the applications were due, we had no financial means to support him. He successfully pursued the GHO RELI scholarship, and upon his return from RELI, immediately started implementing what he had learned, sharing his knowledge with his peers (four new Coordinators started at KSU that summer just out of graduate school). Justin serves as Coordinator for a new first-year experience building in KSU's first suite complex. The 913-bed facility is state of the art, with many public spaces designed for creative programming. Working with his RAs, Justin created one of the strongest staff teams on campus, producing award winning programming. Justin readily volunteers to assist, and in just one year has become involved in a number of critical projects on campus. One example is our "Get In Gear" opening activities offered at the beginning of each semester. Justin took on the logistical oversight for these large scale programs, enhancing the activities to levels not previously seen at KSU. The quantity and quality of the programs increased, as did the attendance, with even the "boring" and academic programs attracting hundreds of students. Since Justin was taking more ownership of the department's large scale programming, he enrolled in continuing education courses to learn more about marketing and design and how to use the latest software packages. Outside of our department, Justin volunteered to teach a section of KSU1101, our freshmen seminar, for which he receives no additional compensation.

Justin's involvement is not limited to campus. As an active volunteer at GHO and SEAHO, Justin desired to get more involved in our state housing organization. He unsuccessfully ran for SEAHO representative, and then ran again for GHO Vice President, but again was not elected. Instead of being discouraged and walking away from GHO, Justin learned that GHO needed a Webmaster and nobody else in the state was stepping up to volunteer. Despite his limited web design experience, Justin volunteered and was appointed Webmaster, then sought the necessary education to enhance his web skills. When the previous web account expired, all the data associated with the GHO website was lost. Justin had to start from scratch, researching for a new website host, and creating from the ground up a new GHO site. He gathered historical data and spent many long hours finding and scanning old newsletters and relevant documents. The new site is a work in progress, but it already offers some vast improvements over the old site. GHO recognized Justin for his contributions with their Vickie Hawkins New Professional award.

Justin's master's degree is in business, and even though he has a good command of student development principles from his undergraduate and graduate experiences in housing, he is constantly seeking ways to increase his knowledge of the student affairs field. Sometimes in our profession we strereotype those who have graduate degrees from outside the field, and assume their understanding of students and impact may be diminished, but nothing could be further from the truth in Justin's case. Justin excels in all areas of his job, not only providing outstanding programming, but he has been an exceptional supervisor for his RAs, and a superior student conduct hearing officer.

On the person side, Justin is very quiet and thoughtful, and in a field of extroverts who can sometimes overwhelm the introverts, Justin has offered our department and our state a calm, cool, and collected approach that is often missing. In addition to his professional accomplishments and efforts in his first year post-Master's, Justin also got married, and shortly thereafter his wife began a graduate program in Savannah. Justin successfully balances his work and home responsibilities, making time to be there to support his wife for the important moments in her career as well. I believe Justin is very deserving of this award, and has an incredibly promising future ahead of him.

Sincerely,

Michael L. Sanseviro, Ph. D.