Potsdam
THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

Date: February 5, 2023

To: To Whom It May Concern

From: Dr. Shalu Wunnava, Associate Professor & Department Chair (Business Administration)

Re: Support Letter for Dr. Supraja Gurajala's Continuing Appointment and Promotion to Associate Professor

To whom it may concern,

It is my pleasure to recommend Dr. Supraja Gurajala for Continuing Appointment and Promotion to Associate Professor.

I have witnessed Dr. Gurajala's journey as an academic for over 11 years now. I first met her when I joined SUNY Potsdam as a tenure-track Assistant Professor in 2011. At that time she was working as an adjunct instructor at SUNY Canton and was teaching an Information Systems course. She was the only one in Potsdam I knew at that time who was teaching the same subject as I was. Dr. Gurajala was very friendly and offered insights about teaching the subject which I found very helpful as someone just starting her teaching career.

Over the years, we kept in touch, and I saw her progress on her journey in doctoral studies. And later it was a pleasant surprise when I came to know that she had joined SUNY Potsdam and was now my colleague in Dunn Hall. Even though we were in different departments and disciplines, we definitely had some understanding of each other's subject areas and there were many occasions when we would just run into each other in Dunn hallways or stop by at each other's office to discuss various matters regarding course development, research interests, pedagogical strategies, student engagement & management, service opportunities, etc.

Because of my discussions with two other Computer Science Department faculty who are now retired, I knew that a revamp of Computer Science curriculum was needed to bring it to current times. So it was a validation of their selection and hiring of Dr. Gurajala when I saw even as a new tenure-track faculty how committed she was to revising curriculum, developing new courses, and improving the Computer Science program.

Dr. Gurajala is one of the rare junior faculty that I have known in my academic career who has developed so many new courses. She was instrumental in developing and offering courses in new and challenging subjects such as Cryptogtaphy, Machine Learning, Data Analysis & Visualization, etc.

We've had many discussions about the highly relevant topic of Big Data. She also had given me lot of insights when I was developing a new elective in Social Media.

With dwindling enrollments across Higher Education, it is very important for colleges to offer courses that are in tune with the needs and demands of the industry, and train our students in programs that will equip them with job-ready skills. From this perspective, it is very important to highlight Dr. Gurajala's significant contribution to program development. She led the development of a track in Data Analytics and significantly aided in the development of a track in Computer Security. I am very confident that these new program offerings will boost student enrollments in Computer Science.

In addition to being a visionary faculty leading program and course development, Dr. Gurajala is also an exceptionally committed educator and has demonstrated excellence in teaching. A few years ago, I had the opportunity to observe Dr. Gurajala's teaching. It was an Introduction to Cryptography class. I found myself listening to her lecture with interest and turn into a student during the class period. Dr. Gurajala's knowledge and experience clearly shone through in her teaching, organization of materials, and comfort level with the course content. It was obvious that her students respected her.

The two most interesting observations I took away from her class were: (1) rather than teaching the necessary foundational mathematical algorithms and about cyphers separately, she made the connection between them for the students to see, understand, and grasp the material in a much more clearer way. This also created a level learning field for students who were at different levels with regard to what they learnt or remembered of the foundational mathematical knowledge. I found this way of teaching to be very impressive. Rather than criticizing students for forgetting the pre-requisite knowledge or putting those who forgot at a disadvantage, she tried to bring all the students up to speed and to the same page. (2) Dr. Gurajala posted her assignments on Moodle, but unless the students decrypted the cyphers she posted they didn't have a way of knowing when the assignments were due. All the assignments were in cypher text and the students wouldn't even know the due date for the assignment unless they decrypted the cypher. The students seemed excited about it and seemed to highly respect Dr. Gurajala and her engaging and innovative style of teaching. Especially for a discipline like Computer Science, "a learning by doing" strategy is very important not just for student learning, but it is also critical for student retention, graduation, and job placement success.

Dr. Gurajala creates a welcoming and inclusive classroom environment that obviously seems to put the students at a comfort level that is conducive for learning.. It is very important for an instructor to maintain that balance of respect and approachability to

ensure a relaxed environment, while at the same time exercise control over the classroom. Dr. Gurajala demonstrated that she excelled in striking the right balance in class room environment and management, thus ensuring student engagement, learning, and class control.

Over the years, Dr. Gurajala has also been an active member of our campus community by serving the college and students in various service and service leadership roles. This has made her an integral member of our college community, and a significant voice when it comes to student affairs and student well-being.

When it comes to research and scholarly work, Dr. Gurajala is an impressive scholar in her field with 15 international/national conference publications/presentations, 3 publications in peer-reviewed journals, and she also co-organized an international workshop on data analytics that was attended by over 25 researchers from reputable institutions around the world.

In addition to being such a busy, productive, and effective academic, she also finds time to serve the local community. She has been serving as the faculty mentor for the Friends of India Association (FIA) at Clarkson University, and has been guiding and assisting the international students of Indian origin in putting together and hosting an annual Diwali (Festival of Lights) celebration that brings together community members from all over north country to celebrate and experience Indian culture, music, art, and cuisine. Not only that she was also involved with fundraising and cooking and providing free meals to local community members.

With such an incredible all-round contribution to SUNY Potsdam, our college and students, local community, and also professional research community, I consider Dr. Supraja Gurajala an asset to SUNY Potsdam, and integral to our continued growth and success. Therefore, I highly recommend Dr. Supraja Gurajala for Continuing Appointment and Promotion to Associate Professor.

Sincerely,

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