

Dear Evaluation Committee,

It is my honor to nominate my graduate student mentor, Christina Bejjani, for the Dean's Award for Excellence in Mentoring. Her distinct qualities and commitment to mentoring that I see in her in our three-year mentoring relationship make her very qualified for this award. She genuinely invested her time, emotion and professional knowledge to build strong bonds with her mentees and to effectively help them develop through their research career. In the past three years, she helped me grow through every stage of my research journey - from familiarizing me with the research topics, developing my own independent project, to my Ph.D. application.

She first guided me through the very start of my research career by helping me set clear goals and providing resources. I am an honor thesis student in the Egner Lab and will be applying to a Ph.D. degree in cognitive neuroscience this fall. I would not have become a researcher like I am today without having Christina as my mentor. When I joined the Egner Lab at the start of my sophomore year, I had little research experience and knowledge about where the field of cognitive neuroscience is heading. Christina created both detailed short-term plans and broad long-term goals for me, which not only gave me direction but also helped me form healthy mentality that research career is a long-term accumulation of knowledge and skills. She provided a list of resources to get me familiar with the classic literature in our field and we discussed the readings weekly to track my progress, during which she was always very patient to explain the concepts. I think this process is extremely important to a new scientist because it helped me form my initial research interest.

Moving on to the next stage, she encouraged me to discover my own specific research interests. She strategically changed her mentoring style from providing hands-on guidance to encouraging me to bring forward original study ideas. We would email each other back and forth or meet weekly in the lab to discuss my hypothetical research concept or design. Once we decided on an idea, she would also provide resources to help me learn the skills necessary for conducting the project I proposed. For example, my honor thesis project requires analyzing functional magnetic resonance imaging data in a new software that I have never used before. She provided plenty of resources for me so that I can teach myself and we would also discuss the best approach to conduct the analyses in great detail. One of the projects that we worked on together was actually published at *Psychological Science* and during this process, she showed me how publishing a paper works in terms of timeline, correspondence with editors and writing skills, all of which are extremely important for my career. At this stage, she helped me realize my full potential. I felt for the first time that my research ideas had great values, which is the hope for someone who is starting her own independent research.

Even though I cherished this mentor-mentee relationship so much, I am applying to graduate schools to continue my research career. At this career development stage, she also provided great resources to help me net-work with other PIs that I want to work with. She introduced me to many of them when we were at the Cognitive Neuroscience Society Annual Conference so I had the chance to share my research experience and interest with potential future PIs. She also shared her personal stories during her application season and told me things that she wished she had known before in terms of selecting the right PI, interview tips, time management, etc.. She also provided very constructive feedback on both my statement of purpose for graduate school application and my senior thesis, which greatly improved my competence in this coming application season. Her advice was extremely valuable for my research career development in graduate school.

Growing as a mentor is fundamental to her professional development. Everyone can see her passion for teaching and mentoring others just by the time, energy and effort she put into different mentoring opportunities that she sought out herself. For example, she taught Introduction to Cognitive Psychology during summer 2019, while I was also staying in the lab for summer research. She worked on her lecture slides so carefully to make sure that she made the concepts clear and

interesting for students who are just starting to learn psychology. Nothing generates more fruitful results when you genuinely care about the work that you are doing, the person that you are working with and when you are putting in the best efforts you can. For Christina, she accomplished all of these points in her mentoring journey. She always motivated me simply by setting a good standard.

My gratitude for her mentorship is beyond words. I think her efforts and excellence in mentoring deserves more recognition. I am certain that she will continue to inspire so many new scientists and help them grow in science until they become successful as well.

Sincerely,
Ziwei Zhang