

# ILLINOIS

## COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

Department of Food Science & Human Nutrition  
260 Bevier Hall, MC-182  
905 S. Goodwin Ave.  
Urbana, IL 61801

August 9, 2018

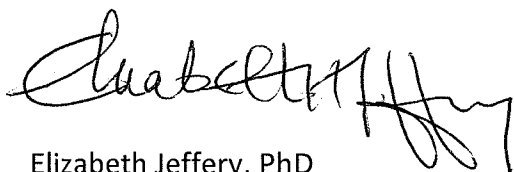
To whom it may concern:

I am delighted to write a letter of nomination for Mrs Molly Black, for the SPaRC innovation award. Molly has worked with me for over 20 years as a physical science technical assistant, slowly taking more and more responsibility for the administration of the lab, including supporting the grad students, making sure they have what they needed to do their work, that they know how to use the equipment, and that the equipment is safe and in good working order.

If this sounds like any other technologist, let me explain why Molly is different. She constantly takes on responsibility without being requested – reviewing animal protocols and rewriting them as necessary (she has a certificate as a veterinary technician), ensuring that safe conditions are maintained in the lab and that harmful chemicals are correctly disposed of, ordering materials in a timely manner and ensuring that the correct funding agency's grant is debited. Molly is always here first, always takes responsibility and always works with an earnest and cheerful disposition. This coming Saturday, our floor will be without electricity. Molly has carefully taken charge of ensuring that all samples and materials that need to keep frozen are moved to a safe place.

As I start to move toward retirement and closure of the lab, Molly has taken it upon herself to identify those other faculty who might need equipment and chemicals for which I have no further need, but also to combine orders among labs as my order needs shrink, to allow me to continue to work at a reduced level. She has been working with several other labs – particularly aiding new faculty with the mound of paperwork necessary for safety regulations, animal use, ordering methods and equipment set-up.

Molly has taken her job of physical science technologist and turned it into something that supports many faculty, allowing us all to focus on novel research ideas and put them into action. Molly is the 'go to' person in the Department for all lab technology administration.



Elizabeth Jeffery, PhD

Professor Emerita, Food Science and Human Nutrition



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Innovation Award for University Staff Award  
Selection Committee member

Dear Committee member:

Molly Black, Physical Science Tech Assistant, has worked in FSHN for 20 years beginning with Dr. Jeffery and then expanding her work to my lab in 2009 and more recently also providing assistance to Dr. Pepino de Gruiev, Dr. Jaume Amengual and Dr. Bill Helferich. Frankly, my laboratory could not live without her multiple contributions. I told her if she was to retire, I would have to do the same. Some of the services that she provides to me and my students include: animal breeding, genotyping, surgery and animal colony management; training students on various cell culture and analytical procedures; carrying out tissue extraction and HPLC analyses; monitoring grant budgets and all lab ordering; arranging for equipment repair; staying in contact with all the technical representatives from suppliers; managing all undergraduate work schedules, and most importantly, she is the lab safety manager. Multitasking must be her middle name. Lest you think that her tasks amount to a normal set of job responsibilities, Molly does all this for other labs too. One under-appreciated value is that by monitoring the ordering of supplies for each laboratory, she can order some items in bulk and save costs for everyone. Mrs. Black also anticipates people's and lab needs and has saved many an experiment by being prepared (when others are not). Moreover, Mrs. Black always works with a smile and has a "yes, I can get this done" attitude. She has never complained about her high workload, amount of tasks or the difficulty of the task. It a rare person who has the versatility that she has, while accomplishing everything with excellence in mind. Just this year, Molly received the George H. Lanter Outstanding Staff Award from the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition. In conclusion, Molly Black is an invaluable member of my laboratory and is highly deserving for selection for the University Staff Innovation Award.

Sincerely yours,

John W. Erdman Jr., Ph.D.  
Professor



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Department of Food Science & Human Nutrition  
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August 10, 2018

Dear Selection Committee:

It is a sincere pleasure to nominate Ms. Molly Black for the 2018 SPaRC Innovation Award for University Staff at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I have known Molly for approximately five years and she has worked in my research laboratory for a little over a year. Molly is a dedicated and talented research technician whose efforts in the laboratory make a real difference in how my laboratory functions. She has significant influence on all the work in my laboratory. Because of her dedication and attention to detail, I feel that Molly is worthy of the 2018 SPaRC Innovation Award.

Molly is very adept and uses innovative approaches in maintaining equipment. When problems arise, she will thoughtfully say "Let me think about this" and then will come up with a solution to the problem that makes you wonder why you did not think of that yourself. One example that clearly demonstrates her innovative thinking concerns a student in another lab who had worked very long and hard on a project and then discovered that the computer with the software the equipment used had failed and a replacement computer was no longer available. Without the use of this equipment, she would have been required to find different procedures and would not have been able to link her previously collected data with the data she was about to collect. This could have seriously jeopardized her thesis research and delayed her graduation. Molly located a computer (in use in my lab) with the required software, linked it with the equipment so the student could analyze the multitude of data from the experiments. Her creative solution to the problem saved many hours of research for the student that otherwise would have had to be repeated.

Molly is a resourceful research technician, and she applies her innovative thinking in all five of the laboratories in which she works. In addition, she is very cheerful and friendly and a joy to be around. My postdocs and graduate and undergraduate students know they can rely on Molly to provide a creative solution to any problem they encounter in the laboratory. Her extensive experience and capabilities are instrumental to the success of our and others' work. She is expert in applying what resources she has at hand in creative ways to meet the goals of the moment. She is always quick to lend a hand and does so cheerfully. She is personable and patient, and has a talent for instructing others and encouraging them to innovate and improve.

In summary, I have no reservation in giving Molly Black my highest and enthusiastic recommendation for the 2018 SPaRC Innovation Award for University Staff. If you or the committee need any additional information, please contact me at [helferic@illinois.edu](mailto:helferic@illinois.edu) or at 217-244-5414.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill Helferich".

William Helferich, Ph.D.  
Professor of Nutrition  
ACES-Funded Professorship in Diet, Women's Health and Aging (2007-2022)  
Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition/Division of Nutritional Science

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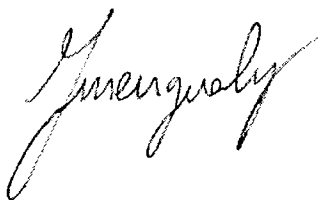
To the Selection Committee for the Innovation Award for University Staff,

I am pleased to nominate Molly Black to the SPaRC Innovation Award. I joined the Department of Food Sciences and Human Nutrition last January as Assistant Professor, and I met Molly a few weeks after. She was working part time with Dr. Erdman, with whom I work closely. From the beginning, I thought that Molly was very proactive and driven to solve any problem it could appear in Dr. Erdman's lab. Shortly after, I asked if she could also help me out to set up the lab and work with me to establish my new research program.

Molly has been helping me since March, but she is the most crucial member of my lab. Immediately after joining, Molly helped me adapt to my new role as a PI. She takes care and supervises our PhD and undergrad students; she trains them in basic techniques such as cell culture, genotyping and colony maintenance. As I am fully aware of her potential and drive, Molly is currently deeply involved in two major projects where she works without any supervision. For example, she recently mastered the histological quantification of atherosclerotic lesions in mice using our fluorescent microscope. This technique is complex and she picked it up immediately. Looking at the way she works, Molly is extremely careful and precise, and she is always willing to learn new techniques and the rationale behind the work we perform in our lab.

I have worked with at least 20 research assistants during my PhD and postdoctoral training, and I can assure that Molly is by far the best one among them. Therefore, I want to nominate Molly without any hesitation to the SPaRC Innovation Award.

Sincerely,



Jaume Amengual, PhD  
Assistant Professor of Personalized Nutrition  
Food Science and Human Nutrition  
217-300-7716  
[Jaume6@illinois.edu](mailto:Jaume6@illinois.edu)



**COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL, CONSUMER & ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES**

Department of Human Development & Family Studies  
222 Bevier Hall, MC-180  
905 S. Goodwin Ave.  
Urbana, IL 61801

August 9, 2018.

To whom it might concern:

It is my pleasure to write a letter of recommendation for Mrs. Molly Black for the SPARC innovation award. I know Molly since 2008 at my arrival as an Assistant Professor at the Department of Food Sciences and Human Nutrition and after my transition to other appointments in the College of ACES. In the last 10 years, I have seen how her support role for many faculty, graduate and undergraduate students in the laboratories in Bevier has grown. She is a friendly and knowledgeable presence in the 4<sup>th</sup> floor, securing the safety and good management of assets that contribute to advance and reach research milestones.

It might be easy to consider her a lab manager or technician, in the daily chores of a lab. However, she goes beyond on keeping track of important standard operational procedures are in place. Certainly, she keeps track of very important management of orders and maintenance of animal protocols and chemicals. Molly accepts new responsibilities and challenges with great disposition and positive attitude and always seeks for solutions to facilitate research outcomes. Two small example of her work disposition include the contribution to train my students on safe use of expensive equipment (HPLC) and next weekend on taking care of the power outage in the building. At the very last minute she was ask to help me to secure all invaluable samples and materials of my laboratory were safely maintained at the required frozen temperature.

Mrs. Black is a fantastic support personal, creative and capable to contribute into many research programs and projects. She facilitates that we focus our time in more productive tasks, and add value to team efforts. Molly deserves the credit of the SPaRC innovation award.

Sincerely,

*Margarita Teran-Garcia M.D., Ph.D., FTOS*  
Research Assistant Professor Department of Human Development and Family Studies  
Extension Specialist Hispanic Health Programs  
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Urbana, IL 61801

August 10, 2018

### *SpaRC Innovation Award*

Dear Members of the Review Panel,

It is my pleasure to write this letter of endorsement for the nomination of Molly Black for the SPaRC Innovation Award. I have known and work with Molly since I joined the Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition, two years ago.

Molly is one of the most prepared and pleasant to work with technicians I have ever met. She has been instrumental in my lab as she fulfills many roles with high professionalism. From helping us navigate "I-Buy", and always find better, more economical versions of the products we need, to taking care of our gas chromatographic equipment, she is always ready to work and does so with a big smile. Molly carefully anticipates problems that may occur in the future and plans ahead to prevent them so that we can keep a productive environment in the lab. For example, she independently organized an alternative electrical system and alarm system to make sure that all our freezers keep working undisturbed during renovations of Bevier Hall. She helps me make sure that all students in my lab are up to date in biosafety training and routinely provides them with important tips and insights that significantly contribute to their training.

Molly goes above and beyond fulfilling responsibilities of her position. Whenever we have a doubt on what would be better to buy for the lab, or where can we find anything, she has a thoughtful suggestion. She imprints with quality everything she does and the four floor at Bevier Hall is a happier place when she is around. We are very lucky to have her in our laboratory. Molly is an outstanding person who incessantly transforms our working environment to make it a safer, more efficient, and more pleasant place to work and that is why I think she deserves the SpaRC Innovation Award.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Yanina Pepino', written over a horizontal line.

M. Yanina Pepino, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Ingestive Behavior  
Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition  
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