

July 27, 2023

SPaRC Awards Committee
Illinois Sponsored Programs

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to support the nomination made by Elyse Rosenbaum, Director, Center for Advanced Electronics through Machine Learning (CAEML), of Meghan Calandro-Howell, Sarah Lorbiecki and Chris Wilson for the SPaRC Collaboration Award.

I had the pleasure of working with these three lovely professionals during my six-year tenure as Operations Manager with CAEML. Their willingness to develop communications procedures that allowed us to better work together to plan, manage and track subawards for the center; communicate with the centers Industry Members and put through a successful Phase II proposal made my job OH so much easier!

Chris would frequently contact me suggesting timelines or processes for submitting an upcoming 'batch' of subaward documents and seemed to never tire of my 'has this gone through yet?' queries. Sarah would work with me every year to create invoices that I could send directly to my industry members, who I was afraid wouldn't take time to look at *another email from Illinois SPA*, but who I was confident WOULD read emails from me. We didn't want them to miss the billing, and she understood and was flexible enough to find the best way to process those invoices.

Meghan and I communicated about CAEML business so frequently we should have had a dedicated line! Her assistance in interpreting the details of the CAEML award and the subawards was invaluable to my work. And, because she had worked with the center so long and understood not just the contracts, but also how we operated, she was able to help draft a very specialized and detailed set of Bylaws for our successful 2nd five-year award proposal. These Bylaws have become the recommended template for a number of new center proposals across the country!

The work of these three individuals with CAEML was not just a collaboration, but more of an alliance. Their connection to CAEML, willingness to understand our processes & goals and commitment to the Centers success continues to be instrumental in its success. For all their efforts and dedication to teamwork, I believe they are most deserving of the SPaRC Collaboration Award.

Sincerely

Jill Peckham

Jill Peckham
Past Operations Manager for CAEML

July 27, 2023

Kamil Tamimie
Assistant Director
Training, Outreach and Data Management
Sponsored Programs and Research Compliance
1901 South First Street
Champaign, IL 61820

Dear Kamil,

I hope this letter finds you in good spirits. I am writing to personally support the nomination of three individuals for their collaborative efforts, which significantly contributed to the success of the Center for Advanced Electronics Through Machine Learning (CAEML) program at the University of Illinois, by its Director, Elyse Rosenbaum.

- Meghan Calandro-Howell, SPA Pre-Award
- Sarah Lorbiecki, SPA Award Management
- Chris Wilson, Coordinated Science Laboratory

The coordination and collaboration between Meghan, Sarah, and Chris related to CAEML and the management of its membership fee collection and subaward issuance to our partner universities was done with creativity, efficiency, tact, and precision.

Warmest regards,

Amy V. Brooks

Amy V. Brooks
Associate Director Business Operations

July 27, 2023

Re: SPaRC Collaboration Award

To Whom It May Concern:

I wish to nominate **Meghan Calandro-Howell**, Senior Award Negotiator (SPA), **Sarah Lorbiecki**, Assistant Director of Award Management (SPA), and **Christina (“Chris”) Wilson**, Assistant Director of Sponsored Program Administration (CSL), for the SPaRC Collaboration Award in recognition of the exemplary service they provide to the NSF Center for Advanced Electronics through Machine Learning (CAEML).

CAEML received an Industry-University Collaboration Research Center (IUCRC) Phase I Award from the National Science Foundation in 2016 and a Phase II Award in 2022. In both phases, I have served as the Center Director. The professionalism of the above-named persons has allowed me to focus on the center’s research rather than on what might be termed its business administration. Furthermore, I believe their efforts likely contributed to our success in the Phase II competition. Finally, their competency contributes to the Center’s success in recruiting and retaining industry members.

CAEML is a modest-sized research center whose complexity is more typical of a large research center, which is why its success is contingent on non-research staff excellence. CAEML is composed of 3 university sites (Illinois, North Carolina State, and Penn State), 1 partner university (Georgia Tech), and 13 member companies, of which 3 are headquartered overseas. NSF money flows to the 3 university sites and is then redistributed toward Illinois to support a center-wide Operations Manager; internal to Illinois, the Operations Manager has the title Research Program Manager. The companies’ annual membership fees all flow to Illinois. Upon receipt, those funds are allocated to researchers at the 4 participating universities through a subaward process. The obligations and rights of each participating university are spelled out in a Memorandum of Understanding. The companies are signatories to a Membership Agreement that was drafted by NSF. CAEML-specific policies are set out in the Center Bylaws.

CAEML’s Operations Manager keeps tabs on all center-related activities but she does not have the authority or expertise to issue payments, make subawards, or negotiate contracts. The nominees’ competency along with their open lines of communication have allowed the center to operate smoothly. A few illustrative examples follow.

IUCRC industry members pay an annual fee, receiving an invoice for that purpose. In Phase I of CAEML, those members were also required to re-sign the membership agreement every other year. All those documents are issued by SPA and sent to each company’s representative on the CAEML Industry Advisory Board (IAB). The IAB representatives are R&D engineers and managers; Sarah and Meghan recognized that the IAB representatives might not carefully read emails arriving from some unknown person at the U of I. Therefore, they arranged for CAEML’s Operations Manager to forward documents to the IAB on their behalf. If that was not possible, they notified the Operations Manager that an email had been sent to the IAB, which enabled her

to follow up. The IAB representatives are well acquainted with the Operations Manager and do not ignore correspondence from her.

NSF's IUCRC program solicitation is a lengthy document that spells out the program rules and requirements. The sites comprising an IUCRC are further responsible for developing policies for their center's governance. Meghan was the contracts specialist who assisted in the writing of CAEML's Phase II Bylaws and Membership Agreement. To do this, she mastered the details of the IUCRC program and learned about CAEML's Phase I operations. Chris took the lead to familiarize Meghan with CAEML's Phase I operations. Meghan gained a good understanding of the center's needs through discussions with the center's Operations Manager.

Chris and Meghan worked out a process by which the center's Operations Manager, Jill Peckham, could serve as the point of contact for all sub-awardees, recognizing that Jill had become well acquainted with the research faculty and business office staff at the partner schools. Jill would request the materials needed for each subaward, e.g., budget, justification, SOW, LOI, and award compliance form. After the packet of documents was complete, Jill would forward it to Chris in the CSL Business Office, who would then submit it to SPA. This eliminated the need for any back and forth correspondence between SPA and the sub-awardee, trying to collect the necessary bits and pieces.

Chris Wilson managed the subaward process superbly. She kept track of what materials were outstanding from each PI, where in the processing stream the award was located, e.g., at SPA or at the sub-awardee, and she notified the Operations Manager if a phone call to the subaward institution was warranted.

I enthusiastically advocate that Meghan, Sarah and Chris receive a Collaboration Award.

Sincerely,



Elyse Rosenbaum

Melvin and Anne Louise Hassebrock Professor in Electrical and Computer Engineering