

July 19,2024

Dear Colleagues:

I am pleased to support the nomination of Ms. Brittany Stein, Senior Business and Finance Coordinator in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering (MatSE), for recognition by the Sponsored Programs and Research Compliance (SPaRC) Outstanding Service Award. The high quality and exceptional productivity and of her service in research administration makes her highly deserving of this recognition.

As described in the accompanying letters of support for this nomination, Ms. Stein is a high-performing member of the Illinois research administration community and has established a trusting rapport with the faculty member she supports. When Ms. Stein joined the MatSE business office, she created a more robust monthly financial account review system so that each faculty member's portfolio could be more appropriately tracked and monitored, providing details on personnel and salary details, burn rates, and future budget planning details. Now, each faculty member has up-to-date financial information monthly so they can plan for purchases, proceed with the hiring of research personnel, manage reporting requirements, and plan research program renewal proposals in a timely manner.

Ms. Stein's previous role in the Post-award section of SPA was an excellent foundation for transitioning to be the main research administration contact in MatSE. However, she also excels at the Pre-award/Proposal portion of her mission to support her faculty members' research efforts. She has such an excellent reputation as a premier proposal manager at Illinois that she has been repeatedly asked to serve as a SPaRC'Ed instructor for various proposal courses. Ms. Stein has never missed a sponsor deadline and has improved MatSE's adherence to SPA's proposal submission policy by engaging early and firmly with her faculty members. It is telling that two of the nomination letters are from SPA staff members, showing just how broad a network Ms. Stein has created in research administration at Illinois, considering them her true colleagues with whom she has created a respectful and trusting professional relationship. Ms. Stein knows a successful research administration team includes stakeholders from various University units. As echoed in the supporting letters, Ms. Stein is also highly valued by the MatSE faculty. They appreciate her knowledge, professionalism, and ability to manage every aspect of the proposal process at the departmental level with excellence.

Ms. Stein has a truly outstanding record of accomplishments in research administration and is an exceptional candidate for the SPaRC Outstanding Service Award.

Sincerely,



Nancy R. Sottos  
*Department Head and Swanlund Endowed Chair  
Department of Materials Science and Engineering  
& The Beckman Institute at the University of Illinois*



Department of Materials Science and Engineering  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
1304 W Green Street  
Urbana IL 61801

April 21, 2024

Dear Members of SPaRC Award Selection Committee,

I am writing to express my most enthusiastic support of Mrs. Brittany L. Stein for the SPaRC Outstanding Service Award. I am an Assistant Professor in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering and an affiliate with the Cancer Center at Illinois, Department of Bioengineering, Carle College of Medicine, Beckman Institute, Institute for Genomic Biology, and Materials Research Laboratory at UIUC. Brittany is our Senior Business & Finance Coordinator in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering. She has been handling the submissions of my research proposals and managing my research portfolio since I started my research group at UIUC in August 2020. Overall, I cannot ask for a better business and finance coordinator than Brittany. She patiently and kindly guided me through the submission of my first research proposal back in August 2020, spent so many efforts helping me put together all the documents needed for each grant application, and perfectly managed all of my research grants. **I told my colleagues, peers, and friends many many times that I have the best business and finance coordinator in the world.** Myself and my whole group are extremely grateful for Brittany's support in the past four years. All of Brittany's hard work paid off; under her support and management, my group has secured 12 grants with a total of 8.7 million research funds, among which 5.3 million goes to my lab. In the several paragraphs below, I will give a few examples to showcase the most outstanding service Brittany has provided to me and my research group. Even though I cannot speak for other faculty in the Department, I have heard a lot of compliments about Brittany from time to time in informal chats and meetings. Whenever a topic on grant staff support was raised in our lunch and coffee breaks, we always felt proud of the tremendous support we have received from Brittany and our Business Office.

Whenever I decide to apply for a research grant, I send an email to Brittany with the basic information about the grant opportunity. Brittany replies in a few hours (the latest I heard back was 24 hours when she was busy catching other deadlines) to confirm she would manage my submission. Brittany will follow up with a second email in 1-2 days by providing a very detailed list of documents & information needed from me. After confirming with me the plan for research personnel on the proposed project, her third email would be a draft of the research budget. Indeed, her first draft of research budget is always quite close to the final version. I only needed to reply her email to suggest a few changes on the research supplies and animal costs, and we then quickly finalized the budget. In scenarios when faculty in other Departments or Institutions were involved, I would connect Brittany with the collaborators' business office. Often time, Brittany would communicate with those business coordinators to come up with a budget draft; I didn't need to get involved in those communications at all. In the end, I would receive a final budget that has been confirmed by all parties from Brittany. From what I described here, you can tell how enjoyable my working experience with Brittany has been!

Once I have all the research documents ready, I will share them with Brittany. She will read all the documents carefully, and make sure all the requirements from the funding agencies (as detailed as the font type, font size, and subsections of research proposals) have been fulfilled. I never had to worry about whether anything is missing from my grant application materials. Myself of course would try my best to confirm all documents and information are there, but it makes my life much easier when I am certain that Brittany would catch it if anything goes wrong. Brittany is so efficient in communicating with me and having all documents well organized. We managed to submit nearly all of my research proposals to SPA in time for a full review. The fact that SPA did not return any comment for >95% of my proposals speaks to the wonderful job by Brittany.

I also learnt a lot from my working experience with Brittany in the past four years. In particular, I learnt to pay attention to every single detail listed on the proposal guidelines. Sometimes, I felt some proposal formatting requirements by the funding agency do not make any sense, so I tended to go with my own preference and ignore those tedious requests. Brittany would be the person who kindly reminded me that it is always better to adhere to the requirements so that our other efforts are not in vain. In some cases, she would contact the funding agencies for me and asked for clarification on certain requirements. I truly appreciate those moments and often feel more motivated to spend some time dealing with the details, especially considering that Brittany is making additional efforts to get our proposals through. Brittany's patience and carefulness was even more special when we dealt with DoD proposals, for which we often have to itemize every entry on the budget and provide a number of supporting documents. I cannot imagine how I would manage those proposals in the absence of Brittany's help.

Brittany also play a vital role in monitoring and managing my awarded grants. Whenever the burning rate of any grant is high, she will make detailed suggestions to me on how to best balance the burning rate of each grant. Upon receiving my confirmation, she would communicate with each of my group members on the adjustments on their spending accounts. I appreciate all the efforts from Brittany, which have allowed me to fully focus on my research, teaching, and mentoring. My group members also often spoke highly of Brittany and the Business Office to keep everything on track.

To summarize, Brittany is such a supportive, kind, patient, and warm person to work with, and has been the best business and finance coordinator I can imagine. I am genuinely grateful for all of her support and efforts in the past four years, which have been integral to maintain my vigorous lab. Her outstanding services to the faculty, staff, and students in our Department of Materials Science and Engineering has greatly benefited everyone here. She has my highest recommendation for the SPaRC Outstanding Service Award.

Sincerely,



Hua Wang  
Assistant Professor  
Department of Materials Science and Engineering  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign



Department of Materials Science and Engineering  
The Grainger College of Engineering  
1304 W. Green Street  
Urbana, IL 61801

July 16, 2024

## Letter of Support, Nomination of Brittany Stein, SPaRC Outstanding Service Award

Dear Selection Committee,

With this letter I support the nomination of Ms. Brittany Stein, Senior Business & Finance Coordinator in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering (MatSE), for recognition by the Sponsored Programs and Research Compliance (SPaRC) Outstanding Service Award in the strongest possible terms and without any hesitation. I am convinced that she is highly deserving of this award due to her outstanding service in administrative support of our department's research mission.

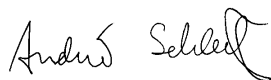
As a Blue Waters Associate Professor in the department, I am running an active and vigorous research group in electronic structure predictions of materials and, in addition, am involved in various national and international initiatives in research, education, service, and industry collaborations. While Ms. Stein coordinates research administrative tasks for many faculty members in the department, I will, in the following, illustrate her competitiveness for this award using my own experiences with her work.

For several years Ms. Stein has supported me in attracting grants from a diverse set of funding sources, including from the National Science Foundation (NSF), internal proposals such as the MatSE AfterSchool Academy and the Faculty Fellowship of the National Center for Supercomputing Applications (NCSA), and industry collaborations, e.g. with IBM within the IBM-Illinois Discovery Accelerator. In all these instances I can blindly rely on her relentless support, since she reliably stays on top of deadlines and is extremely familiar with important federal and local requirements and regulations. This is particularly important since they depend and vary with each sponsor or funding source. Examples of internal funding opportunities, where this was crucial, include the Materials Science and Engineering AfterSchool Academy that was conceived in 2020 and involves reimbursing graduate students for their participation and ordering and shipping experimental kits to high school students. For the NCSA Faculty Fellowship, Ms. Stein supported me in hiring different students as well as managing the corresponding travel arrangements with students from our department and staff at NCSA. Amongst the most challenging external opportunities Ms. Stein has worked on is the funding agreement with Sandia National Laboratories within their LDRD program, and the corresponding contractual constraints on spending and timelines.

Similarly, Ms. Stein helped set up the contracts with IBM within the IBM-Illinois Discovery Accelerator Institute, which requires annual updates, and monitoring of intricate budgeting. Finally, and most notably, Ms. Stein helped applying for and managing a complex educational project funded by the National Science Foundation. For this project, five US based researchers presented lectures at a summer school on Electronic Structure Methods in Kigali, Rwanda in 2023. Ms. Stein managed that grant and coordinated all travel reimbursements for the five US based teachers, four of which were not based at UIUC. This, in particular, shows how she goes above and beyond her regular expected duties, and goes more than the extra mile for her outstanding service.

In addition, Ms. Stein's work attitude is excellent and professional. She ensures efficiency and accuracy, both of which are crucial for her role. In summary, Ms. Stein has a truly outstanding record of accomplishments in research administration and I could not envision a more exceptional candidate for the SPaRC Outstanding Service Award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "André Schleife". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'S' at the end.

André Schleife,  
Blue Waters Associate Professor,  
schleife@illinois.edu

July 19, 2024

Dear SPaRC Awards Committee:

I am pleased to provide this letter of support of Brittany Stein's nomination for the 2024 Outstanding Service Award.

I first began working with Brittany in 2018, when I took on the role of Proposal Coordinator for Materials Science and Engineering. I was a brand-new Proposal Coordinator, anxious about riding the line between conducting a thorough review and annoying my department colleagues with a barrage of notes. My worries were completely unfounded when it came to working with Brittany. It felt like we fell into a seamless working relationship. Brittany is thorough, intuitive, and has ensured that we work collaboratively. She does not shy away from asking questions as she wants to ensure that her work is correct. She doesn't approach difficult situations with an ego, instead she stays calm under pressure and ensures a solution is found that benefits everyone involved.

Brittany is kind, reliable, and thoughtful. She chooses her words with thought and is always considerate of your time when communicating. Over the last 6 years I have worked with her on hundreds of proposals, and I have always been impressed with the way in which she maintains the delicate balance of supporting her Principal Investigators while also working in cooperation with SPA. I never dread a proposal submission from Brittany- I know for certain that the proposal was crafted with thought and care. The faculty of MatSE are truly lucky to be collaborating with someone as dedicated as Brittany.

In summary, Brittany is incredibly deserving of this award, and I am grateful that I have had the chance to work with her for the past 6 years. I strongly recommend Brittany Stein for the 2024 SPaRC Outstanding Service Award.

Sincerely,

*Katie Bateman*

Katie Bateman

Assistant Director, Proposals

Sponsored Programs Administration



## SPONSORED PROGRAMS ADMINISTRATION

1901 S. First St., Suite A, MC-685  
Champaign, IL 61820-7406

July 10, 2024

RE: SPaRC Outstanding Service Award Nomination for Brittany Stein

Dear 2024 SPaRC Retreat Committee:

I am writing to wholeheartedly endorse Brittany Stein for the SPaRC Outstanding Service Award. Having collaborated with Brittany in various capacities throughout her tenure serving the Urbana-Champaign research community, I can attest to her unwavering commitment to exceptional customer service. Brittany consistently exemplifies the qualities that define outstanding service, making her an exceptionally deserving candidate for this award.

In her current role within the Materials Science & Engineering department, Brittany has set a high standard across all aspects of her responsibilities, including proposal submissions and post-award activities. Her meticulous attention-to-detail during proposal submissions and efficient post-award administration have both significantly contributed to securing substantial research funding for her unit and compliance within the terms and conditions of the awards she administers at the department level. Brittany enjoys the respect of the principal investigators she supports, as well as SPA staff. Her unit is often mentioned as a model for effective research administration, and Brittany plays a pivotal role in maintaining those standards.

Brittany's pleasant demeanor, kindness, and dedication to excellence make her a joy to work with. She genuinely cares about her work, and I have utmost confidence that any task entrusted to her will be addressed both promptly and accurately. Colleagues within SPA have consistently praised Brittany's abilities, recognizing her ability to strike a balance between exceptional service and compliance. Furthermore, she proactively seeks guidance when faced with uncertainties, adding to her value as an individual who does not act until she has investigated and is confident with a course of action.

In summary, Brittany Stein's exceptional contributions and commitment to service excellence make her an outstanding candidate for the SPaRC Outstanding Service Award. I wholeheartedly recommend her for this well-deserved recognition.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Susan Canfield".

Susan Canfield

Advanced Senior Award Management Coordinator

Sponsored Programs Administration

To whom it may concern,

I would like to provide my support for why Brittany Stein should win a 2024 SPaRC award. Brittany has been an incredible help to me as I have transitioned into my role as a Research Program Coordinator for the University of Illinois. She has taught me many of the day-to-day functions of my position and has always been there to support me. If there is ever a question that I can't find the answer to, I know I can reach out to Brittany for assistance.

Brittany is kind, understanding, patient, and helpful. I couldn't have asked for a better coworker and colleague. Her ability to be available when needed and can-do attitude are admirable and something that I strive for personally. She has expertise in all things Business and Research Administration and knows just the place to look for information she is unsure of. I'm sure she appreciates being a building over from me so that I can't pop in for questions more often!

Brittany is more than deserving of a SPaRC award. She has all the traits of a top-class Research Administrator and continues to be one of the best coworkers I've ever had. I hope that you will consider her for an award this year as she surely deserves it.

Sincerely,

Nick Menacher  
Research Program Coordinator  
Materials Research Lab



Allison Sutton  
Department of Materials Science & Engineering  
The Grainger College of Engineering

July 19, 2024

Dear SPaRC Awards Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to nominate Ms. Brittany Stein for the SPaRC Outstanding Service Award. As outlined in the Award call, Brittany fully encompasses the spirit of this award as she daily demonstrates outstanding service in support of research administration at Illinois, specifically in her role in the Department of Materials Science and Engineering.

Brittany fully understands Research Administration is a constantly evolving field, and she is always quick to find solutions to adhere to new guidelines, usually in ways that allow us to reduce onerous administration tasks on our faculty members/principal investigators. Recent examples of her willingness to update our workflow to better serve our faculty include the transition to SciENcv for PI biographical forms, adhering to SPA's updated proposal policy, and managing disclosure of foreign-related funding streams. While sometimes it would be tempting to grumble about changing policies that are burdensome to our workflow, she doesn't waste any time on negativity, and instead aims all her energy and effort on adapting quickly.

Brittany has a keen eye for detail, which is imperative at the Proposal stage of the Research Administration life cycle. However, this also serves MatSE well at the Award Negotiation and Close-out stages. I often joke that we have our own in-house Award Negotiator, since she is able to quickly and accurately hone in on specialized terms and conditions, or limitations of certain awards. Brittany is somehow able to balance detailed reviews with timeliness, and has never missed a proposal deadline. In fact, due to the rapport with and respect from our faculty members, she has been able to improve our submission timelines as part of SPA's updated proposal submission policy. Further showing her ability to juggle is the fact that, in some cases, PI are not able to give her much lead time on proposals, and she is still able to ensure a compliant, on-time proposal for those she supports.

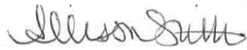
Brittany is a repeat SPaRC'ed instructor, which I believe be to one of the highest compliments an Illinois CRA can receive. Not only has she been asked back to teach courses again, she has also instructed more than one course, which clearly shows the breadth of her expertise in the Illinois Research Administration community.

Further documentation of the broad scope of Brittany's impact and her stellar reputation in her role are reflected in the accompanying letters of support for this nomination spread beyond our

own department. Brittany has created a network of experts to help support her in her role, showing that she understands clearly it takes many stakeholders for a proposal to be researched, reviewed, submit, received, and managed against all compliance requirements and timelines.

Thank you for this opportunity to share Brittany's story with the committee, and hopefully the larger SPaRC community at the upcoming retreat.

Sincerely,



**Allison Sutton**  
*Assistant Head for Administration*

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 **ILLINOIS**

