

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
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May 18, 2017

Dear selection committee:

I am pleased to nominate Dr. Dianne Bystrom, director of the Carrie Chapman Catt Center for Women and Politics at Iowa State University, for the Des Moines Business Record's 2017 Women of Influence award.

Bystrom, a respected educator, scholar, and community advocate, is a woman of strategic action and profound inspiration in her field. She has devoted her career to empowering women to make a difference in leadership, politics, and public service.

In 1996, Bystrom took the helm of the Catt Center, a leadership role she still holds today, and has used her position to tirelessly advocate for improving the status of women in our state, nation, and world. Directing a nationally-respected, nonpartisan center on politics is no easy task: I can think of few who could handle this public role with more impeccable poise or higher ethical standards.

In her field, Bystrom is a widely sought-after expert. Since 1996, she has been interviewed for more than 650 local, national and international media stories, providing increased media exposure for Iowa as an important place to learn about women, elections, and politics. Her credibility is bolstered by her own impressive publication record and her elevation of women's representation in research. For example, she created a first-of-its-kind Archive of Women's Political Communication at Iowa State that preserves the speeches of women leaders in global politics, averaging more than 31,000 page views per month. She also established the Women in Politics Database at ISU to track Iowa's gender-balance in elected and appointed offices across all Iowa counties and cities.

In addition to her many responsibilities at the Catt Center, Bystrom has always made it a priority to be actively engaged in the local community. She is a long-standing member of the League of Women Voters of Iowa (board of directors from 2012-2016); Rotary International/Ames Noon Rotary, Nexus Executive Women's Alliance, and the Iowa Women's Leadership Project.

Yet, it is Bystrom's indefatigable passion for creating opportunities for young people, women especially, that is most impressive and why I firmly believe she is deserving of this award. Among her many accomplishments at the Catt Center, she has created a Legacy of Heroines scholarship program; a Leadership Studies Program; and a Global Leadership Study Abroad Program, all designed to help undergraduate students develop leadership skills. She has

personally taught courses in women and politics, political communication, and leadership studies to large numbers of students, inspiring them to pursue civic engagement.

"Dianne is especially encouraging of students," one young alumnus wrote, "because she understands the college years are a critical time in terms of women being encouraged to seek public office." Indeed, Bystrom brought the national Ready to Run®: Campaign School for Women to Iowa to help address the gender gap in elected and appointed office. Since June 2007, more than 400 people have been recruited to seek elected or appointed office through these workshops; this spring the workshops experienced record-breaking enrollment.

Women's suffrage leader Carrie Chapman Catt once gave this stirring directive following the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution: "Progress is calling on you to make no pause. Act!" Bystrom has always persisted in answering the call of progress throughout her career. A true trailblazer paves the way for others, and Bystrom has influenced and encouraged countless young women to step forward as the next generation of leadership. Step by step—from leadership studies classes to global study abroad to Ready to Run® workshops—she has paved a pathway at Iowa State for developing future leaders.

Her contributions will have a lasting impact as these women, and men, too, take action in their communities by running for office, leading a local civic organization or becoming more engaged in the political process. Many of them, no doubt, will also be trailblazers in their own way and time. This exponential, enduring effect will leave a profound legacy and one that makes Dr. Bystrom most deserving of the Business Record's "Women of Influence" Award.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Beate Schmittmann". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Beate" clearly legible and the last name "Schmittmann" written in a more stylized, connected script.

Beate Schmittmann
Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences