May 24, 2018

To the Women of Influence Review Panel,

I am writing to recommend Dr. Laura Higgins as a 2018 Woman of Influence.

Laura has been an incredibly valuable member of the Science Center of Iowa’s Board of Directors since joining us in 2014. Her professionalism, passion for science education and naturally inquisitive nature have woven themselves into the fabric of our mission helping to make us a dramatically better organization.

Laura’s SCI story began long ago. Prior to joining the board of directors, Laura was a member of SCI’s first *Portal to the Public* cohort, a science communications program that helps scientists better communicate their complicated fields to the general public. It was the launching point for many years of volunteer service that Laura has committed to SCI. She is a consistent presence at our Girls in Science Initiative events, showing young women that science careers can be dynamic and fun. (She has even been known to show up wearing a living “cockroach broach” to spark conversations!) Today, more than 20 women scientists from DuPont Pioneer have participated in our Girls in Science programs, helping to inspire the next generation of scientists, thanks to Laura.

Beyond her passion for science and her commitment to science education, she is also a relentless advocate for Des Moines and Iowa in general. I once came upon a busload of what I thought were tourists unloading for lunch at The Hub on the Principal Riverwalk. As I chatted with some of the visitors, I learned they were scientists and entomologists from around the world – and then Laura emerged from the crowd. She was hosting this important meeting of entomologists through her work at DuPont Pioneer and wanted to make sure they had a chance to see more of Des Moines than just a conference center. I was impressed that she made the effort to introduce her colleagues to the city in which she lives.

I can also speak directly to Laura’s volunteer work leading one of the most successful Girl Scout troops in Iowa’s history. Along with her co-leader, Laura started this group of young girls in the 2nd grade and this spring hosted the “bridging” graduation ceremony for these nine girls as they have continued to be involved with the troop through their senior year in high school. As a parent of one of these girl scouts, I can attest to the direct impact Laura’s dedication, creativity and inspiration has had on my daughter. Laura has been an important partner helping my daughter explore the world, stretch her limits, enjoy the intrinsic rewards of her accomplishments and build her confidence. I know my daughter would not be the strong and creative young woman she has become if Laura were not an integral part of her growth.

Dr. Laura Higgins is a uniquely dedicated, innovative leader in Iowa’s STEM community and the Des Moines metro. Her tireless commitment to promoting science education and encouraging students, especially young women, to pursue careers in STEM fields makes her a truly remarkable woman of influence.

Best Regards,

Curtis Simmons

President & CEO Science Center of Iowa