

May 8, 2019

Dear Members of the Selection Committee,

I am writing to enthusiastically recommend **Dr. Ruxandra Looft** for the 2019 Women of Influence award based on her contributions in the areas of student success, global education, and diversity and inclusion at Iowa State University and beyond. I am honored to share with you some of Dr. Looft's accomplishment to illustrate how her impact on campus and in the Ames community meets the criteria of this award.

### **Success in chosen field**

Dr. Looft's early career success in higher education is evident in the number of students she has reached, in the way she has innovatively contributed to our campus and the discipline of higher as a whole, and through the impact of her research and scholarship. During her first year as an academic adviser in World Languages and Cultures, she increased student enrollment and retention in the majors offered (Spanish, French, German, and Classical Studies at the time) by 40% by effectively communicating the value of cultural literacy and second language acquisition through a number of innovative outreach efforts. In 2013, she created a unique Global Student Ambassador program for the department that continues to thrive today, for which she raised over \$9,000 in institutional funds over the course of two years. At the time of its creation, the program was only the second of its kind in the college of Liberal Arts and Sciences (LAS) at Iowa State and offered engaged students a paid leadership role that allowed them to develop valuable professional skills outside of the classroom.

Dr. Looft has presented at local, national, and international conferences and has led workshops on the value of language learning, culture studies, and how any and every career path – including STEM majors – benefit from the addition of a language major in today's global economy. As a result, Dr. Looft was awarded a national advising award for early career accomplishments in 2015.

Dr. Looft's dedication and commitment to her students has also earned her student-led accolades; she has been named as a champion of student success numerous times over her career and was more recently selected by LAS Student Marshal, Kelsey Hrubes, as her faculty escort during the 2017 university commencement ceremony, leading the college procession, as a symbol of her commitment to student wellness and success.

### **Lasting impact on the community**

In 2018, Dr. Looft was appointed director of the Margaret Sloss Center for Women and Gender Equity at Iowa State. During her first year, Dr. Looft undertook a major campaign to update the center and make it a truly modern, 21<sup>st</sup>-century department based on best practices and current

research in the fields of student success and gender studies. As a result, the center's work and focus is being informed by its first ever strategic plan and the center's name was changed on January 2, 2019, to the Margaret Sloss Center for Women and Gender Equity (from the previous Women's Center). The name change, which Dr. Looft explained to the community [via an open letter](#), emphasizes the Sloss Center's renewed commitment to serving all students, including students who have traditionally been overlooked by the women's movement.

As the Sloss Center's ninth director, Dr. Looft's legacy – within just one year of her tenure – is that of building a welcoming and open space on campus where students of all identities and backgrounds can find community and thrive.

### **Involvement with civic and/or nonprofit organizations**

Dr. Looft's work on campus has always held a community engagement component; from taking Global Student Ambassadors to speak with local high school students about the importance of continued language learning in college to, more recently, partnering with ACCESS (Assault Care Center Extending Shelter and Services) to provide support and advocacy for student survivors of domestic and relational violence. In 2018, Dr. Looft created office space for ACCESS staff to hold weekly office hours in the Sloss House on campus to be more easily accessible to students. Dr. Looft has also served on the YWCA Board of Directors (2018-2019), providing expert knowledge on gender equity issues, and further bridging the divide between campus and community organizations.

More recently, Dr. Looft was appointed by Mayor Haila of Ames to the Library Board of Trustees based on her expertise in gender and diversity issues as well as international and intercultural competencies. Last, but not least, Dr. Looft has been a long-time champion of building connected, thriving, and healthy communities. From 2012-2018, she organized and led monthly community bike rides for families, often ending at local fairs, business, or parks, to emphasize the value of knowing one's city, neighbors, and community spaces. She served as the Outreach and Education coordinator for the local non-profit Ames Bicycle Coalition and collaborated with the State of Iowa Safe Routes to School Program to promote more childing biking to school while also advocating for the addition of more crossing guards near Elementary Schools in Ames.

### **Role model for other women through not only their achievements but also ethical standards**

Dr. Looft has earned a solid reputation on campus and in the community for being a champion of young people and their emotional and academic success. She has been a role model to many students during her time on campus, evidenced by the frequency with which she's invited to speak to student groups and clubs. She is a role model not just for women students but for all students who set foot in her office at Iowa State. I am thrilled to be nominating her for the Women of Influence award.

Respectfully,



Megan Jeanette Myers, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of Spanish  
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