Tenure Committee
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, KY

Dear Committee Members,

I am honored with the opportunity to write a letter of recommendation for the promotion and tenure of Dr. Natalie Mountjoy. As a recent graduate of Western Kentucky University with my master's in biology, I feel uniquely qualified to write this recommendation, as Dr. Mountjoy played an integral role in my research as one of my thesis committee members. I was also a teaching assistant for Dr. Mountjoy during my three years at WKU. Through my time as her mentee and her assistant, I got to know Dr. Mountjoy very well, and I am in full support of her promotion and tenure appointment.

As Dr. Mountjoy's teaching assistant from Fall 2019 through to Spring 2022 I was given the unique opportunity to see how she was able to not only adapt, but almost seamlessly handle unforeseeable challenges and adversities. Her response to the changing environment caused by the COVID-19 pandemic is a perfect example of this quality. During this time Dr. Mountjoy not only fostered and encouraged the continued academic growth of her students, but also acted with understanding and care throughout the semesters following. As a professor, Dr. Mountjoy not only values her student's learning but also their mental and physical health and wellbeing. Her ability to connect with people, along with her tenacity, passion, and enthusiasm for learning and the sciences was and is remarkable and make her a suitable candidate for a tenure position.

With a welcoming energy, Dr. Mountjoy creates a safe space for her students to learn and grow in academia while also feeling comfortable to reach out for help. As a student who has experience in special education services, I have also witnessed Dr. Mountjoy's ability to accommodate students learning differences. Through my time in academia I have seen, all too often, students with learning disabilities discouraged from seeking help not only due to judgement from their peers, but the sense that they are burdening their professors. Not once did I feel this way with Dr. Mountjoy, and, as her assistant, I found that her students did not either. Dr. Mountjoy is constantly monitoring her class to see how she can make the learning experience better for all of her students to help them grow in academia and as people. Not only does she implement different teaching techniques in her lecture halls and labs to accommodate her students, but she has dedicated her studies and research in the sciences to better the learning and growth of college students. Her intellectual brilliance coupled with an enthusiasm for learning help to make Dr. Mountjoy an incredible professor, mentor, and researcher.

Unlike many graduate students at WKU, my master's research did not take place in a lab setting but took place in the field in Kenya for 7 months. This created challenges in my ability to communicate with my committee due to spotty Wi-Fi and a 9-hour time difference. In addition, the extended time in the field under strenuous conditions made for a difficult transition back to life on campus for my final semester. Dr. Mountjoy was incredibly understanding and was able to provide assistance, not only with my research; she created a welcoming environment for me upon my arrival back to the US and became a mentor for my everyday life as well. Dr. Mountjoy's ability to adapt to the difficulties of time differences and constantly changing research questions due to the pandemic and extraordinary circumstances in the field, as well her compassion and care, made her an incredibly important asset on my committee, which is why she continues to be asked to perform on the graduate committees of other master's students.

Dr. Mountjoy is an outstanding professor and I fully support her promotion and tenure appointment. Her professional and caring nature as a professor are unmatched in her field, and I believe her to be one of, if not the strongest and most compassionate professors in the biology department at WKU. Her strength and understanding have touched and shaped the lives of so many students who have passed through WKU. As a WKU graduate herself, Dr. Mountjoy truly understands what it means to be a Hilltopper, and her success as a professor can be seen through the growth of her students. I am positive Dr. Mountjoy will continue to inspire and succeed as a professor and researcher, and that her students as well as her colleagues will benefit from her energy and innovative problem solving as much as I have.

Sincerely,

Sophia Corde
WKU Graduate School Alum
PhD Student
University of South Alabama