

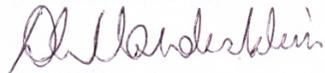
To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to confirm that Dr. Colette Feehan is eligible for the CAREER Program and that I, as chair of her home department, am committed to supporting her should she be awarded funding from the CAREER Program. With regards to mentoring and support, Dr. Feehan has an assigned faculty mentor with whom she can consult on all academic and research matters. As her chair, I am particularly vested in the success of all untenured faculty and, thus, play an additional role as support person. Support on my part consists of, but is not limited to, identifying potential sources of additional funding when needed, identifying and providing (when possible) lab resources, working with faculty members to develop a teaching schedule that is not onerous and allows more flexibility for research, and exploring opportunities to incorporate students into authentic research experiences in the lab and in the classroom. This kind of support from the chair is not unique to myself, but is a long standing tradition in the Department. For example, in 1999, Dr. Quinn Vega received a CAREER grant and was supported in incorporating his research for this grant into one of the main courses taken by our Molecular Biology majors. Given our prior success and given her excellent record of teaching I have every confidence that Dr. Feehan can successfully incorporate her research into her teaching.

Dr. Feehan proposes to establish a system to standardize the classification of and investigate the impacts of compound extreme events in the marine environment on the distribution of sea urchins. This proposal has exciting potential for involving students in authentic research and for expanding this potential through collaboration with other faculty in the Department (for example, Dr. Paul Bologna has involved students in research on sea urchin population dynamics in the recent past). Involving students in authentic research is a general goal of the Department of Biology at Montclair State University. We have been actively involved in the SEA PHAGES program and are working to expand the number of sections of our introductory biology courses (BIOL112 and BIOL113) that incorporate the SEA PHAGES approach. Dr. Bologna and now also Dr. Jennifer Krumins have been involving students in authentic research through a research course for upper level students. Their approach has been to allow students to develop their own research question within a given topic area and then collect their data during an intensive field session at a remote field site. Until recently, the remote site was at the Virgin Islands Environmental Resource Station, but that was destroyed in a hurricane. We are now trying to set up a similar program in the Galapagos in collaboration with the Charles Darwin Research Station (we have an MOU with the research station). Dr. Feehan's goals to develop an oceanography field education program for undergraduates that is local and low-cost, and therefore accessible to larger groups of students, is consistent with the Department's approach to research and teaching and our overall goal to expose students to research. This activity is thus fully supported and encouraged. Dr. Feehan's proposed CAREER project would also work strongly in her favor for gaining tenure and promotion.

In conclusion, should Dr. Feehan's CAREER proposal be funded, it will greatly contribute to her opportunity for tenure and promotion and also contribute to and expand our goal of offering multiple opportunities for students to be involved in authentic research projects. Furthermore, Montclair State University is a designated Hispanic Serving Institution. Within the Biology major, students are largely African American, Hispanic, and/or female. Expanding these kinds of research opportunities to our students will help to give them the tools to succeed and expand the pool of URM and female scientists. Given all this, I enthusiastically endorse Dr. Feehan's CAREER grant application.

Sincerely,



Dirk Vanderklein, PhD.
Chair, Department of Biology