



THE UNIVERSITY OF
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KNOXVILLE

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Dr. Sharon Jean-Philippe
2431 Joe Johnson Drive
274 Ellington Plant Sciences
Knoxville, TN 37996

Dr. Jean-Philippe:

As the Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, I am writing this letter to express my support of your grant application to the USDA Higher Education Multicultural Scholars Program (MSP).

As a land-grant university, a core part of our mission is providing equitable access to higher education to students and positively impacting underserved and underrepresented communities within our state. The proposed project—recruiting underrepresented scholars participating in Tennessee Promise to be undergraduate students in the Department of Forestry, Wildlife, and Fisheries—is an impressive strategy to partner state and federal diversity and access programs to create bridges from community college to a four-year university to the workforce.

In addition, the proposed project's priority on mentoring and monitoring creates an environment where these students will be supported in ways that will positively impact their year-to-year persistence and eventual success in graduating and joining the resource management and urban forestry industries. I believe the strategies and priorities of the proposed project will serve as a model of innovative recruitment and retention of underrepresented students for our institution and others in the agricultural and natural sciences disciplines.

Professionals from diverse backgrounds in the resource management and urban forestry industries will assist scientific advances that could have multifaceted implications for agricultural economy, health disparities, food deserts, urban ecology, and more. Impacting societal problems of this nature comes full circle to continuously fulfill the University of Tennessee, Knoxville's land-grant mission.

In conclusion, I strongly endorse the proposed project for the USDA Higher Education Multicultural Scholars Program grant.

Sincerely,

Rickey Hall
Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion
Office for Diversity and Inclusion

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