We are writing to nominate Gina Butcher for her dedication to the Biomedical Science Graduate Program (BMS). Gina has been at UCSD for 35 years, and the administrative director of the BMS program since 1990. Although I have interacted with many excellent Staff during my 36 years at UCSD, Gina stands out as being exceptional. Her commitment to the BMS Program and mission of UCSD is beyond compare. For her, this is not just a job, but also an integral part of her life. Regardless of whether or not she is in her office, she makes herself available to students, Faculty, and Staff to assure that all problems are immediately addressed. She is the “go-to” person, as no one else has the knowledge base that she has regarding the graduate program, UCSD policies, and appropriate contact individuals at UCSD. The fact that the BMS program is ranked nationwide at the top by the prestigious National Research Council attests not only to the academic excellence of our faculty and students, but also to her successful administration of the program.

Because BMS is a Program, rather than a Department, it is managed by a Chair and Co-Chair, who are replaced every 2 to 3 years. Gina is an incredibly valued employee with exceptional leadership skills promoting a positive sense of community in a diverse group of ~200 students, ~200 faculty (spanning multiple departments) and staff. Gina orchestrates the ever-changing program leadership and students and professionally leads the staff, allowing the program to run seamlessly. She has high expectations for herself and her staff and because of her outstanding leadership, a strong sense of ethics and mentoring, her staff consistently receive awards for outstanding performance. This doesn’t just happen. Gina leads by example and has developed an environment of communication between herself and her staff, allowing jobs to overlap when deadlines loom, making sure everyone is well trained and informed of new UC procedures, and exhibiting an extraordinary amount of compassion and care when any BMS faculty, student or staff has a problem. Gina sees to it that everyone does his or her job well. As Chair of the BMS program, I particularly appreciate her ability to anticipate the tasks that need to be done and seamlessly carry them out.

BMS faculty and students are a widely diverse group, representing men and women from different races, cultures, creeds, socioeconomic levels and sexual orientation. Under Gina’s supervision, the BMS administration consistently upgrades their in-service training with regard to evolving UC policies on diversity. Gina ensures that her staff participates in safety, health, and environmental protection programs, and receive appropriate training. An example that illustrates her exceptional sensitivity and concern for wellness and safety relates to dealing with mental health issues. Gina has a unique rapport with the students and has recognized that problems with mental health seem to be increasing in the graduate students. Appreciating the seriousness of this issue, she has now incorporated the Counseling and Psychological Services Program into the Orientation Program for entering students. Gina’s contributions also extend beyond the BMS Program. As an example, this year she is participating as a judge in the campus wide Grad Slam 2015 event.

In the 24 years Gina has been managing BMS, the number of faculty, students and staff have grown enormously as BMS was transformed from a small Physiology/Pharmacology graduate program to a large umbrella program that includes faculty members from the School of Medicine, Skaggs School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, Jacobs School of Engineering, Sanford/Burnham Institute, LIAI, TSRI, and the Salk Institute. Throughout all of these changes, Gina has maintained unity within BMS program by providing outstanding management, demonstrating organizational capability, maintaining equanimity and ensuring that BMS remains properly funded.

Particularly noteworthy during this past year is the attention that she gave to the BMS budget that allowed us to defray some of the graduate student costs that the UCSD BMS faculty shouldered. Given the difficulty of obtaining NIH grants, this action greatly boosted the morale of the faculty. It was important to show that the BMS program supported the faculty, as many were beginning to question whether they should accept a graduate student into their lab. Additionally, to supplement the resources available to the program, she has worked with BMS Chairs, Salk, and Burnham faculty and staff to create a payback agreement for first year students that enter labs at these institutes for their thesis research.

Gina has been nominated many times by different Chairs of the BMS Program and Faculty for the Exemplary Staff Employee of the Year Award, and we strongly feel that it is important that her off-the-chart performance at UCSD for almost 36 years now be recognized with this award. Without question, she is an exceptional employee.