I have had the pleasure to supervise Dr. Nancy Gilson for just over 2-years now. In that time, she has impressed me with her commitment to the students, faculty and curricular needs of GPS. I have been with the university for upwards of 15 years and I know employees like Nancy are a rarity.

First, a bit about GPS. As a professional school which primarily awards masters degrees, our students receive a high level of service. We have our own admissions and career services team, and our student services department, which Nancy heads, works closely with each student to be sure they stay on track for graduation in our very challenging degree programs. The UC’s international affairs school, GPS’s student body is approximately half domestic, half international. Serving our students requires not only a thorough knowledge of the University landscape and policies, but the ability to work across cultural barriers.

Now on to Nancy. Her contributions are many, but I will focus on three:

1. Expansion of the International Studies Program to include a business major
2. Expansion of the analytical writing program during GPS’s summer prep
3. Spearheading proposal preparation for new degrees and programs

In 2010/11, just after Nancy began working with GPS, the school took over the administration of the interdisciplinary International Studies program. This is a popular major which allows students to study international issues across a number of disciplines. Last year Nancy recognized an opportunity to partner with Rady School of Management and offer an International Business major within the program. Coming online this academic year, the degree is proving wildly popular, with approximately 400 already in the major. Her foresight and initiative has enabled UC San Diego to be responsive to student demand.

As a school with a large population of students for whom English is not their first language, as well as students who may have been in the workforce and are returning to school after years away from a classroom, crafting a well-reasoned, well-written academic argument can be challenging. Given the rigor of our program, ~90% of our students attend the summer preparatory courses in economics and quantitative methods we provide prior to the start of classes. Analytic writing has been a part of our prep offerings for some time, but it is not meeting the faculty’s needs in terms of appropriately increasing student writing capabilities. This year Nancy has spent a great deal of time working to lengthen and strengthen this unit, and has even drafted the curriculum for the now 2-week program. Being offered this August, it is not yet known if this course will solve the problem, but there can be no doubt that it is a massive step forward. And one that would not have happened were it not for Nancy.

Above I have given two examples of areas where Nancy saw an opportunity and dove in. In addition to sussing out these situations on her own, she also works extremely well as a team member, pitching in and/or taking the lead when necessary. In the last year or two, Nancy has worked closely with faculty and staff to create two new degree offerings at GPS – a Master of Public Policy and a Master of Chinese Economic and Political Affairs. She is currently working on an internship program for our students in Washington, D.C. and a new track in our BA/MIA program. All of this, while also being the Director for Degree Programs.

Nancy is a well respected member of the GPS team and a wonderful leader. She is a staunch champion for her staff, fighting to be sure their workload is appropriate and that they are given opportunities to grow and advance. She truly operates at a level worthy of the adjective exemplary.