NTANA
UNIVERSITY

August 11, 2026

Commissioner Clayton Christian
Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education
560 North Park Avenue
Helena, Montana 59620-3201

Dear Commissioner Christian:

It is my distinct honor to nominate Dr. Jovanka M. Voyich, Professor and Department Head of Microbiology and Cell Biology and Professor in the WWAMI Medical Education Program at Montana State University, for appointment as a Montana University System Regents Professor.

The Regents Professor designation recognizes faculty whose careers embody the highest standards of scholarly achievement, teaching excellence, mentorship, service, and leadership. Dr. Voyich exemplifies each of these qualities. Over the past two decades, she has established herself as an internationally recognized scientist, a transformative academic leader, and one of Montana State University's most respected faculty members. Her sustained contributions to research, education, public service, and institutional advancement make her exceptionally deserving of this honor.

A Montana State University alumna, Dr. Voyich earned both her bachelor's degree in biology and doctoral degree in molecular biology and immunology at MSU before completing postdoctoral training at the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases' Rocky Mountain Laboratories. Since joining the Montana State faculty in 2006, she has built a distinguished research program focused on bacterial pathogenesis, host-pathogen interactions, and innate immune evasion by *Staphylococcus aureus*. Her work has fundamentally advanced scientific understanding of how dangerous bacterial pathogens evade the human immune system and establish infection, laying the groundwork for novel therapeutic approaches that may reduce dependence on antibiotics.

Dr. Voyich's scholarly record reflects both excellence and sustained impact. She has maintained continuous National Institutes of Health funding since 2006, securing more than $20 million in external support through multiple R01, R21, SBIR, STTR, and U54 awards. Her publications have been cited more than 12,000 times, including nearly 3,000 citations since 2021 alone, demonstrating the continuing influence of her research on the fields of microbiology, infectious disease, and immunology. She has served on NIH scientific review panels, chaired major institutional compliance committees, and contributed her expertise nationally through editorial and grant review service.

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Equally impressive is Dr. Voyich's commitment to teaching and mentorship. Throughout her career, she has mentored nearly 100 undergraduate researchers, guided graduate students and postdoctoral trainees, and supported numerous junior faculty members through major federally funded training and development programs. Former students from her laboratory have gone on to careers at institutions such as the NIH, Stanford University, Johns Hopkins University, the University of Michigan, and the University of Washington. Her excellence as an educator has been recognized through multiple honors, including the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture Merit Teaching Award and the WWAMI Medical Program Excellence in Education Award.

Dr. Voyich's contributions extend well beyond her laboratory and classroom. Since becoming Department Head in 2020, she has provided exceptional leadership to one of Montana State University's most research-intensive academic units while maintaining a highly productive, NIH-funded research program. Colleagues consistently describe her as a thoughtful, principled, and collaborative leader whose judgment is widely trusted across campus. She has chaired the Institutional Biosafety Committee, the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee, and the Conflict of Interest Committee, while also directing major interdisciplinary research initiatives such as the American Indian/Alaska Native Clinical Translational Research Program and Montana's One Medicine initiative. These efforts have strengthened research capacity, expanded opportunities for students and faculty, and enhanced the university's impact across the state and region.

As a land-grant scholar, Dr. Voyich has consistently connected scientific discovery to public purpose. Her leadership in rural and Tribal outreach, health disparities research, bioscience education, and undergraduate research programs reflects Montana State University's mission of service and engagement. Through these efforts, she has broadened participation in science, strengthened pathways for future health professionals and researchers, and helped ensure that the benefits of biomedical research reach communities throughout Montana.

In reviewing Dr. Voyich's record, our campus Regents Professor Review Committee identified her as one of the university's strongest candidates, and Provost Elizabeth Burroughs concluded that her accomplishments exceed even that characterization, describing her as an outstanding candidate whose career reflects precisely the distinction, impact, and institutional value the Regents Professor title is intended to recognize. I fully concur with that assessment. Dr. Voyich's career demonstrates a rare combination of internationally recognized scholarship, extraordinary mentorship, exemplary service, and authentic leadership. She has advanced science, strengthened Montana State University, and enriched the lives and careers of countless students, faculty, and colleagues.

For these reasons, I enthusiastically recommend Dr. Jovanka M. Voyich for appointment as a Montana University System Regents Professor. She embodies the ideals of this distinction and would be an outstanding addition to the distinguished group of scholars who have received this honor.

Sincerely,

Brock F. Tessman
President