July 6, 2026

Dear Regents Professor Nomination Review Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to explain why I believe Dr. Jovanka Voyich is exactly the kind of faculty member the Regents Professor title was created to recognize. Jovanka and I joined the faculty at Montana State University at nearly the same time, and over the past fifteen years I have watched her become one of the University's most accomplished scientists, most respected academic leaders, and most trusted colleagues. During that time, I have had a front-row seat to her leadership—as a colleague in the Department of Microbiology & Cell Biology, as co-director of the recently funded NIH Center for Advanced Molecular Pathogenesis (CAMP), and through her service as Department Head. The Department of Microbiology & Cell Biology occupies a unique place at Montana State University, serving the College of Agriculture, the WWAMI Medical Education Program, and the University's biomedical research enterprise. Few departments carry such broad responsibilities while maintaining a nationally competitive research portfolio, and Jovanka has been instrumental in building and sustaining that excellence. Simply put, I cannot think of anyone who better exemplifies the qualities the Regents Professor distinction was created to recognize.

Jovanka's scientific accomplishments alone merit the highest recognition. She has built an internationally recognized research program focused on the molecular mechanisms of *Staphylococcus aureus* pathogenesis and host innate immunity. Her work has fundamentally advanced our understanding of how bacterial pathogens evade neutrophil-mediated killing and establish infection. Over the course of her career she has maintained nearly continuous NIH support, including multiple R01, R21, SBIR, STTR, and U54 awards, while publishing influential studies that continue to shape the fields of bacterial pathogenesis and host-pathogen interactions. Beyond the accomplishments of her own laboratory, she has served on NIH study sections, chaired institutional biosafety committees, and directs several large multi-investigator research initiatives.

Equally important is the extraordinary impact Jovanka has had on Montana State University itself. As Department Head of Microbiology & Cell Biology, she leads one of the University's strongest research departments with remarkable steadiness and integrity. Many successful scientists see their research programs lose momentum after assuming major

administrative responsibilities. Jovanka has demonstrated that outstanding leadership and outstanding scholarship can reinforce one another. Having worked alongside her to establish CAMP, I do not believe the center would exist in its current form without her leadership. She has successfully maintained an active, NIH-funded research program while creating an environment in which faculty, students, and staff can thrive.

While her scholarly accomplishments are extraordinary, what distinguishes Jovanka even more is the manner in which she leads. She is humble enough to give credit freely, hungry enough to continually pursue excellence, and smart enough to recognize that the best solutions emerge from collaboration rather than ego. As a lifelong Montanan, she brings authenticity, enthusiasm, and confidence to every interaction. She is thoughtful, clear-minded, and deeply principled. Even during difficult conversations, she has an uncanny ability to use humor to lower the temperature, keep people engaged, and guide discussions toward constructive solutions. She leads by example rather than by authority, earning respect through consistency, fairness, and integrity.

Over the years I have come to appreciate something that cannot be measured by publications or grant dollars: when difficult decisions need to be made, people naturally seek out Jovanka's perspective. They trust her judgment because they know it is grounded in careful reasoning, genuine concern for others, and an unwavering commitment to doing what is right for the institution. Those qualities have made her one of the most influential faculty leaders at Montana State University.

The Regents Professor title is reserved for faculty who have achieved sustained national distinction while elevating the teaching, research, and service missions of Montana State University. Jovanka has done exactly that. She has advanced science, mentored generations of scientists, strengthened our institution, and represented Montana State University with distinction on the national stage. She is precisely the kind of scholar, educator, mentor, and leader this honor was created to recognize.

I hope my perspective is helpful as you consider Dr. Jovanka Voyich's nomination. Thank you for your thoughtful service on this committee and for recognizing the faculty members who make Montana State University such a special place.

Sincerely,



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