October 25, 2022

Dear Senior Recognition Award committee,

I am delighted to connect with you on Onyea Cummings’ behalf. She is a superb example of an outstanding senior student at Indiana University, and I am extremely proud of her accomplishments both as my student and as a future leader with an educational and personal foundation in arts, equity, and community. I strongly recommend Onyea for consideration for the Herman B Wells, Elvis J. Stahr, Kate Hevner Mueller, P.J. and Hilda W. Hill, and Susan Butler Awards.

In addition to having taught Onyea in my T428 Production Management class during spring of 2022, I have had the privilege of being one of Onyea’s mentors in IU’s Department of Theatre, Drama, and Contemporary Dance, where she has developed her skills over the past four years as a leader in the performing arts. I’d like to share with you a brief anecdote from her time in T428 to illustrate Onyea’s passion and dedication.

One of my semester-long assignments included asking students to create their own performing arts company, and then develop a season program, budget, and production calendar for that company. Onyea’s production company, Santa & Rudolph Theatre Company (so named in honor of the relationship she had with her grandfather) was theoretically based in Indianapolis and included the following mission statement:

*Santa & Rudolph Theatre is a [Theatre for Young Audiences] company led by BIPOC individuals for the BIPOC theatre audience. By working in and with underprivileged and underrepresented communities, we intend to create a safe space for BIPOC children to express themselves, expose them to theatre arts and technical theatre, and teach life skills.*

The specificity with which Onyea considered her theoretical company and how such a company would accomplish its mission was clear throughout the entire thread of her assignment. Her organization combined her passion for performing arts “bring[ing] back the child-like wonder we all had growing up” as an avenue towards creative skill-building in an underserved population with a recognized priority to decenter the white experience as normative.

Onyea is one of the most genuine and dedicated students I’ve worked with during my time at IU Theatre & Dance. Despite COVID-19 sculpting much of Onyea’s experience at IU, she made every project and assignment count, reiterating a commitment to her values and her goals. Onyea is very much on the right track, and I strongly urge you to grant her all of the awards for which she has been nominated.

Sincerely,

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