



ONTARIO
VETERINARY COLLEGE
DEPARTMENT OF PATHOBIOLOGY



Agriculture and
Agri-Food Canada

Science and Technology
Branch

Agriculture et
Agroalimentaire Canada

Direction générale des sciences
et de la technologie

June 19, 2023

Dear selection committee,

We are writing to you today in support of Dr. Heather K. Allen's nomination for the Iowa Women of Achievement Award. The signatories of this letter represent just a small collection of the international collaborators who were inspired by Dr. Allen's scientific research and had the great honor of working with her directly.

Dr. Allen achieved incredible success in her extremely short career – her PhD research on antimicrobial resistance gene distribution in natural environments was the basis for a Nature Review article (arguably the highest tier journal in our field) that has been cited over 2300 times by other researchers. This work launched her career in the field of antimicrobial resistance, an area which has been identified by the World Health Organization as one of the most urgent threats to global health. Heather continued to establish herself as a leading expert on antimicrobial resistance in swine throughout her career at the USDA National Animal Disease Center, with over 6500 citations for her top 20 papers alone. Her work was essential to the swine industry in Iowa and beyond, and she was frequently invited to speak at conferences locally, nationally, and internationally.

Dr. Allen also made significant contributions to the international scientific community. For example, she was selected to be part of the external science advisory board for the Canadian federal government's research program on antimicrobial resistance (scientific coordinator Dr. Ed Topp). Members of this board are chosen for their globally recognized expertise on antimicrobial resistance and Dr. Allen provided us with critical insight into what we are doing well, and what we could do better. She was very knowledgeable, forthright and constructive in her role as an advisor.

There are a diversity of factors that led to Dr. Allen's success in her career. First and foremost, she had a brilliant scientific mind and was a highly sought after collaborator due to her international reputation and dedication to scientific advancement. Her collaborators often commented on her unique ability to contribute both enthusiasm and critical evaluation to any scientific conversation. She was also unfailing in her respect and admiration for everyone she worked with, and a steadfast supporter of women in science. She was also an accomplished writer with the insight to explain complex scientific concepts in a straight-forward and comprehensible manner to any level of listener. All of these traits contributed to her accomplishments, and her loss is profoundly felt throughout the antimicrobial resistance and microbial ecology research communities.

Dr. Allen was an inspiration to all who worked with her, but especially to those of us lucky enough to have her as a mentor. Among the signatories of this letter, two individuals (Drs. Ricker and Holman) were postdoctoral researchers supervised or mentored, respectively, by Dr. Allen in the last few years of her career. Heather was unfailing in her support of her trainees – celebrating our wins but also challenging us to think deeper about the scientific questions and impact of our research. In our current positions with the University of Guelph (Ricker, Assistant Professor) and Agriculture and Agri-

Food Canada (Holman, Research Scientist), we strive to incorporate the qualities exemplified by Heather into our research teams and continue to be motivated by the short time we had under her guidance.

In addition to her extensive accolades as a scientist, Heather was an inspiration to her community. She poured herself into her passions, whether as a scientist, a mother, a girl scout leader, a cancer blogger or as a friend. In closing, given all her scientific achievements, we feel that Heather is an excellent representation of the values embodied by the Women of Achievement Award.

Sincerely,



Nicole Ricker | Assistant Professor
Ontario Veterinary College | University of Guelph
OVC Pathobiology Building, Rm 4839 | 50 Stone Rd E | Guelph, ON | N1G 2W1
519-824-4120 Ext. 54625 | nricker@uoguelph.ca



Ed Topp, Ph.D.
Principal Research Scientist/Directeur de Recherche
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada/Agriculture et Agroalimentaire Canada
Adjunct Professor, Department of Biology, University of Western Ontario
Cell phone/portable 1-519-860-0235
1391 Sandford Str., London, ON N5V 4T3 Canada
Email/Courriel ed.topp@agr.gc.ca



Devin Holman, Ph.D.
Research Scientist
Lacombe Research and Development Centre
Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
6000 C & E Trail, Lacombe, AB, T4L 1W1
403-782-8143 | devin.holman@agr.gc.ca