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Dear UIUC Leaders:

I am writing to commend the UIUC Science Policy Group (SPG), who are among the most impressive graduate students I've met in years of working with graduate students. For context, I founded a national graduate leadership program at the American Association for the Advancement of Science and am a frequent speaker at student events on science policy and career preparation. I am also a member of the National Academy of Science Engineering and Medicine Committee on "Revitalizing STEM graduate education for the 21st Century."

The SPG leaders invited me to participate in their Science Policy Workshop in September 2017. I also discussed planning with the lead organizers, Libby Haywood, Ryan Rooney, and Zachary Gordan, in the months prior to the event. I was blown away by their professionalism, organization, and especially their strategic vision. They worked backward from clearly defined outcomes to determine the content and speakers for each session. I was particularly impressed that they focused on all of the pillars of sustainability – environmental, economic, and social – and helped participants consider trade-offs among them.

I have rarely seen such strategic vision and planning even among more senior leaders and established organizations. They also treated me like a VIP, attending to every detail and ensuring that I had the information I needed for smooth travel and presentation.

I met a number of other SPG members during meals, and found them to be very thoughtful about a number of issues in science and society. They are passionate about making a positive contribution to the university and the world. I have a feeling that they will continue to make you and UIUC very proud.



I also commend you for offering such students funding to make this workshop possible, particularly as university resources are always limited. With their entrepreneurial spirit, they certainly made the most of the funding! I am sure they would be grateful if you and other UIUC leaders can help them identify additional opportunities and mentors to further develop their talents and serve the university and larger community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Melanie Roberts". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Melanie Roberts, Ph.D.

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