



UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

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Dear Colleagues,

I am delighted to write in thanks for the honor of being selected as this year's recipient of the AIR Outstanding Service Award. As I look at the list of past recipients, I am humbled to be in the company of individuals who have made such substantive and enduring contributions to our field.

I vividly recall my first Forum in 1998 (we were in two hotels in Minneapolis) and being so impressed with the number of people gathered together to share their knowledge and work for the good of students. I was a young professional, had two young children (including an infant), and was still trying to finish a dissertation in Community and Social Psychology. I was overwhelmed as I was trying to balance career and family and school, and there on the platform were Dawn Terkla and Mary Sapp, modeling wisdom, leadership and generosity with their time and knowledge. I recall thinking, "Wow, I'd like to be like them."

It didn't take long for me to find a home in AIR. There were so many people who gave me opportunities to serve, taking a chance on someone they didn't know but who was willing to help. At first it was assignments to help with state and regional programming, or to serve as an AIR track reader and then track chair. Then it grew to service on other committees and eventually elected positions. Along the way, I met many people who have become dear friends and trusted sounding boards. Working alongside so many talented and dedicated individuals has kept me engaged and invigorated, and it has been my hope that I have brought people into the fold, just as others did for me.

As is the case when one has been at the same institution for a long period of time, my colleagues at my home institution have become like family. They have supported my involvement with AIR, allowing me the time and resources to serve, as well as supporting me at each step along the way. In return, engagement with AIR has given those at my institution valuable educational opportunities, a network of colleagues who can be called upon, and resources that go beyond what we get when we attend the Forum.

As I write this letter, in front of me is a photo of AIR Past Presidents, taken in Phoenix a few years ago. I'm still a bit surprised to see myself in that photo with those two women from my first Forum, Dawn and Mary. In receiving this award, I am so thankful that people invited me into spaces where I could serve, and I hope that I've been able to do the same for others. Serving AIR has been a privilege and a labor of love and I thank you for the opportunity to do so and for the recognition with this award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle Appel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning.

Michelle Appel

Assistant Vice President, Institutional Research, Planning, and Assessment