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Dear Professor «commbrname»

At the recommendation of the Department of «dept», I am asking you to serve as “outside member” on the graduate committee of «studentname». You should already have heard from the student, advisor, or department in this regard, so this letter is primarily to confirm the request to have you serve.

According to long-standing University policy, the outside member on graduate committees represents the Graduate School. Accordingly, I think it is appropriate to add my formal request for your services on this committee. I very much hope that you will be able to accept this appointment. Please advise me if you cannot.

In most quality universities, there are three functions of the outside committee member. First, such a person makes available to the student a disciplinary expertise not possessed by members of the major department. This is thought to be desirable in that exclusive reliance on the procedures or conceptual principles of a given discipline is sometimes considered to be restrictive. Second, outside members are believed to be important forces for university-wide academic standards. The presence of outside members presumably encourages departments to articulate standards consistent with overall University faculty expectations. Third, the presence of outside members is thought to symbolize campus-wide acceptance of examination practices that are fair and appropriate for graduate students.

If you have a potential conflict of interest in the research or scholarship of this student, please indicate below. This conflict does not preclude your serving on the committee, but will require extra vigilance in providing a fair and unbiased position as a committee member.

May I ask you, as a representative of the Graduate School, to keep these functions in mind as you serve on this committee? In most cases, of course, this role will not require any conscious, discrete action other than those expected of all committee members. On the other hand, any comments you might care to make about your discharge of these committee member functions would be welcome. Such comments could be delivered, at your discretion, to advisors, department heads, or deans.

If you have any general questions about service as an outside member—or if by some chance you have not had previous notification about this particular committee—please notify the Graduate School. If you have a potential conflict of interest, I simply ask that you indicate this below and return a copy to our offices for the student’s file.

Thank you again for participating in this important academic service to the University and the student.

Jodie Redditi Hanzlik  
Dean, Graduate School  
Colorado State University

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have a potential conflict of interest as follows:

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