

Dear Selection Committee,

It is our pleasure to write this letter of support for Dr. Tabitha Hardy for **the 2024 Mentor of the Year Award**.

Dr. Hardy's contributions to mentoring graduate students are distinguished by her unique efforts across multiple facets of academia and her constant faith in the next generation of diverse trainees. Her consistent thoughts, actions, and practice have transformed the lives of countless PhD students, and below are only a few examples compiled from the [current group of SREB scholars at IU-Indianapolis](#):

Since 2021, I have received constant support and kindness from Dr. Hardy, something that was (and is still) absent from my own (predominantly white and male) graduate program. Dr. Hardy is a powerful role model, continuously reminding young female scientists of color, of what we can achieve. Her presence provides reassurance that we have a dedicated advocate and ally to help us navigate academia's often challenging and inequitable landscape. **She is the only professor my husband knows, and the only one my parents, who live in India, regularly ask about.** This friendly Southern woman is not just an accomplished academic but exudes such warmth and familiarity that even students' families, despite being far away, feel reassured (like my parents). Knowing Dr. Hardy is there-- makes us feel supported and safe, and we truly look up to her.

Soumilee Chaudhuri

Relocating to a new state and a challenging graduate coursework made for a difficult start to my graduate journey. Early on, several faculty members suggested I reach out to Dr. Hardy if I was ever in need of guidance. **In hindsight, I regret not seeking her sooner.** From the moment that I met her, her warm smile and jovial nature instantly made me feel comfortable and reassured. Dr. Hardy consistently listens to student concerns with genuine care and helps us find solutions, often connecting us with resources we didn't know existed. Through my relationship with Dr. Hardy, I have also built meaningful connections with peers across campus, establishing a much-needed sense of community. Now, as I near the completion of my dissertation, she continues to support me by leveraging her extensive network to assist with my career search. **While many faculty members maintain a professional distance, Dr. Hardy goes above and beyond by embracing us.** **Khadija Moctar**

I have known Dr. Hardy and have continued to be her mentee under her advice for 11 years. My understanding of the acronym, Ph.D., was discovered through my interaction with Dr. Hardy as an undergraduate student at Stillman College. To date, Dr. Hardy has gone beyond the call of duty. As our journey progressed into my graduate studies at IU-Indy, Dr. Hardy continues to offer support and advice which has been essential to my academic success. **I have grown to view Dr. Hardy as a gladiator, ready and willing to help me break down any barriers that I may face on my academic journey.** Even though Dr. Hardy wears many hats at IU-Indy: Assistant Vice Chancellor for Graduate Education, Assistant Dean for Student Development and Academic Affairs; Director Preparing

Future Faculty and Professionals; Advisor Underrepresented Professional and Graduate Student Organization (UPnGO); she still answers my calls whenever I am in need for guidance. She never has to pencil me in, and she never makes me feel as though that I am an inconvenience. **Dr. Hardy shows up. She makes time for things that are important to her, and I am proud to say that I am important to Dr. Tabitha Hardy.** **Shaquitta Dent**

One word racked me at the beginning of my second year as a PhD student: guilt. A word that should never be associated with being a student who is experiencing something for the first time. My imposter syndrome reared its ugly head and apathy began to take over my perspective on things. I finally reached out to Dr. Hardy and regretted not reaching out to her earlier. **She assisted me in getting my first accommodations of my academic career, pointed me in the direction of emotional social services, and reassured me that I belonged in my program.** That I mattered and that I was fighting an uphill battle. **Thanks to Dr. Hardy, I currently have renewed vigor to complete my program.** **Camara Wallace**

There are many times when I question my place and presence within the academy as a Black woman getting her PhD. But Dr. Hardy gives me a lot of hope for what could be because of her ability to lead with integrity, authenticity, and wisdom. Despite meeting with many students, organizing thoughtful programs, and having many roles on campus, she always has a warm and comforting smile ready for the next student that walks into her office. Dr. Hardy has mentored me in ways that I cannot always describe but her timing and words of comfort always allows me to feel at peace, seen, and not alone. Dr. Hardy is a fierce leader who reminds her students about the importance of being connected on campus and accessing resources when needed. **Being able to experience Dr. Hardy wholistically also inspires me to remember to 'live' while completing my PhD.** She reminds me to have fun, take breaks, and lean into the experience by simply being herself. **I will never forget an important moment 2 years ago when I was in another state across the country presenting at a conference. Dr. Hardy was attending an entirely different conference nearby, but she took the time out of her busy schedule to come to my conference and visit my poster.** She did not have to do that, but it really made me incredibly grateful for her ability to show up when she is not even expected to. **Nina Johnson**

When I met Dr. Hardy all I can say is that I felt welcomed. **I was nervous about staying in academia at the time when I**

joined SREB but that went away upon meeting Dr. Hardy. She really puts her all into getting to know us individually and making sure we are getting the most out of the conference. Attending SREB conferences with Dr. Hardy to support and mentor us has renewed my drive and spirit for research each time and makes me feel seen. She is an amazing mentor and advocate for all her mentees, and I have truly felt supported. Her joy as a mentor radiates and inspires others to want to pass it forward to the next generation of PhDs. **Moraima Noda**

When I started my graduate career, I joined UPnGO, a professional organization on campus led by Dr. Hardy which aims to empower students of color. This was my first interaction with Dr. Hardy, and ever since, she has been a champion and supporter of me. Attending a predominantly white institution, I was incredibly grateful to find a supportive community of graduate students of color, where we could share experiences and come together. Dr. Hardy also teaches a mentoring course for both faculty and graduate students which has greatly improved my own mentoring skills and strengthened relationship with my mentor. **Dr. Hardy has been so impactful in my life, that I asked her to join my thesis committee, which has been invaluable.** Her experience as a PhD graduate and mentor, has kept me on track which has been something I struggle with as a student, given me the confidence to create healthy boundaries and broaden my perspective on my career options. **Dr. Hardy is inspiring, serving as a guide, a protector and one of the best mentors I could ever ask for.** **Jared Thomas**

I am deeply grateful for Dr. Hardy and the incredible support she has provided during my time as a graduate student. Her genuine kindness, thoughtful guidance, and dedication to helping students succeed has profoundly impacted me. She is always available to offer thoughtful advice and consistently pushes me to pursue excellence. Her encouragement and belief in my potential has instilled confidence in me and countless others, helping us realize our potential and make a meaningful impact. Her presence at the graduate student office creates a welcoming and supportive environment where we feel heard, valued, and empowered. **Every time I meet with Dr. Hardy, she greets me with a warm smile and asks how she can help, a rare and much-appreciated gesture.** She truly makes a difference in the lives of everyone she touches, and I am sincerely grateful for her support. **Miriam Commodore – Mensah**

Dr. Hardy's profound impact on the academic and personal lives of her mentees, combined with her dedication to fostering a diverse and inclusive environment, makes her an outstanding candidate for this award. Her leadership, mentorship, and advocacy have not only shaped the careers of many young scientists but have also contributed significantly to advancing DEI in academia. Our academic community is richer for her presence and the work she continues to do. **Thank you for considering Dr. Tabitha Hardy for the SREB Mentor of the Year Award.**

Compiled By: Soumilee Chaudhuri, PhD Candidate

Dr. Hardy is the epitome of a true advocate for graduate students; especially those of color. Her warm personality, coupled with her knowledge of resources to help students thrive in graduate school and beyond is second to none. She continuously encourages the students to do their best while showing up as her authentic self and encouraging other students of color to do the same. She has been a true supporter and inspiration to me and my graduate school journey would not have been this successful if it was not for Dr. Hardy. **She has advocated for me in rooms when I was not present, introduced me to opportunities, provided a safe space when I needed to talk, imparted life-long advice and has given me feedback on numerous application documents.** I am so grateful for Dr. Hardy and how she continuously goes above and beyond; **she is an unsung hero for many students who have found their place at IU-Indy because of her.** **Isheka Orr**

As a black immigrant student navigating the complexities of a new country and academia, having met Dr. Hardy was a breath of fresh air! Dr. Hardy not only provides invaluable academic guidance but also fosters an inclusive environment where I feel seen and heard. Her unwavering support and commitment to my success here at IU and beyond has been nothing but transformative. Her dedication to mentorship extends beyond the classroom, as she actively advocates for diversity and inclusion. Particularly, **her involvement in initiatives like "Dissing Black Women -Black Women's Readers Theatre" showcases her dedication to amplifying Black women's voices and tackling challenges Black women face on college campuses.** Dr. Hardy exemplifies what it means to be a mentor, and I can think of no one more deserving of this honor. **Jennifer Yanum**

Dr. Hardy is a dedicated champion of inclusion and diversity at IU-Indianapolis. She is a passionate advocate for students and holds several student-centered leadership roles. **I first connected with Dr. Hardy during my application to the SREB program, and it was thanks to her initiative in contacting my department that I became aware of this valuable opportunity.** Since then, she has been consistently supportive and always available whenever I needed guidance. Dr. Hardy received many awards, both internally and externally, for her outstanding work in student support, diversity, and inclusion at IU-Indianapolis. I strongly recommend her for the Mentor of the Year Award, as she has demonstrated remarkable dedication and truly deserves this recognition. **Abdullahi Abdi**