May 2018

To Whom It May Concern:

We are all long-time members of the National Business and Industry Leadership Team (BILT) that co-leads the work of the National Science Foundation's National Center of Excellence for Convergence Technology (CTC) based at Collin College in Frisco, Texas. As such, we are pleased to present this letter supporting the successful business engagement model the National CTC has developed.

We believe students benefit from a strong relationship between educators, businesses, and industry. Giving employers the opportunity to actively help guide an IT program ensures curriculum aligns with those needs and that educators stay current with where IT is heading. As you know, the IT fundamentals students learn today are no longer enough to be competitive in the workforce; entry-level technicians must now know the fundamentals plus newer, more cutting-edge skills. Curriculum must keep up with these changes, and subsequently, faculty must be trained to teach students these new technologies.

Our BILT members give this essential support to educators by:

* Helping inform faculty through **quarterly web meetings** in which we offer our perspectives on the changing landscape of IT so instructors can better prepare for how the industry is evolving.

* **Mentoring students** and making **guest speaker appearances** in classrooms, at conferences, and during special events.

* Providing assistance in developing and evaluating **classroom case studies and student group projects**.

* Regularly **gathering in small "Tiger Team" subgroups** to tackle a specific question, whether it's the importance of requiring student portfolios or the need for a capstone group project that features hybrid cloud business problems.

* Conducting an **annual job skills validation** session in which we discuss and vote on the essential skills an entry-level IT worker needs in order to get hired. Faculty then maps our recommended skills to existing curriculum. Where there are gaps, steps are taken to adjust the curriculum as needed to fill those gaps.
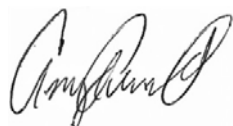
All of this work connects us closely to the CTC's network of educators around the country. We are partners in the process. Because our recommendations and our expertise are so valued, we feel a unique ownership of the programs we help steer and want to hire students that come out of CTC schools. For all of these reasons, we strongly believe that the CTC's BILT model – frequent meetings, regular discussions of industry trends, interactions with students, and annual job skills validations – is one worth emulating.

We understand schools occasionally resist this level of involvement from business groups, but we have no interest in writing curriculum. We understand that your esteemed instructors and administrators are the experts in determining how best to teach students. We simply want to help determine what skills are taught.

In closing, we are committed to the work of the BILT because we all want to help prepare as many workforce-ready job candidates for IT networking occupations as possible. We want to use our know-how to prepare students for lucrative, successful careers in IT.

If you have any questions or concerns, we would be happy to address them.
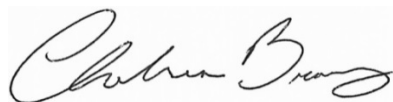
Sincerely,

Amy Arnold
Senior Network Engineer
City of Lewisville, Texas

Kurtis Sampson
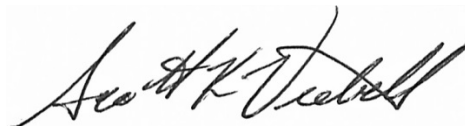Interface Engineer
Philips Medical

Chelsea Bray
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Catalyst Corporate Federal Credit Union

Candy Slocum
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InterLink

Susan Coefield
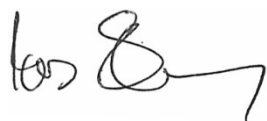Regional Program Manager
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