Dear International Society of Autism Research (INSAR) Student/Trainee Travel Award Selection Committee,

I submit this letter in consideration of a Student/Trainee Travel Award for the 2019 INSAR Annual Meeting. As a Ph.D. candidate who hopes to attend the INSAR Annual Meeting for the third time in 2019, I am excited about participating in the conference that aligns most to my academic/research interests and will further my research/career goals. Broadly, I am interested in understanding the phenotypic variability in ASD relative to other conditions (i.e., language impairment) and in working with low-resource racial/ethnic minorities (hereafter, minorities) with ASD. To pursue this line of work, I aim to be a tenure-track investigator at a research-intensive institution.

In 2017 and 2018, I had the privilege of attending the INSAR Annual Meetings. What resonated with me most were the calls for research focusing on adults with ASD and on low-resource minorities with ASD. Because of the conference in 2017, I had the opportunity to meet with two mentors. The first, Dr. Sara Kover, who studies language acquisition in children with ASD, has remained an invaluable source of career advice. The second, Dr. Betty Yu, who studies language acquisition in bilingual children with ASD, invited me to visit their laboratory and resulted in my joining the executive board of the Asian and Pacific Islander Speech-Language-Hearing Caucus. I also benefited from conference programming. For example, speaking with Dr. Laura Klinger at the "Meet the Experts Luncheon" made me aware of the expanse of funding available to study and work with adults who have ASD. Similarly, the Student/Trainee Workshop taught me about the various career paths available to autism researchers. In 2018, I attended panels discussing autism in adulthood. I both had and heard fruitful conversations about the need to expand representation of racial/ethnic minorities in ASD research. At my own poster, I received valuable feedback on a review of community-based intervention research for adolescents and young adults with ASD. In sum, these Annual Meetings expanded my understanding of ASD and complemented my doctoral training.

At the University of Kansas, my work focuses on the the language abilities of low-resource minority adolescents and young adults with ASD relative to other functional outcomes, particularly as they age out of public education. This interest developed from prior experience as a public-school teacher of low-resource minority adolescents and young adults with ASD, as well as from personal connections to friends whose children with ASD are now facing adverse outcome as young adults. Under the guidance of Dr. Mabel Rice, an international expert in language acquisition and language impairment, I have developed the skills needed to pursue this line of research. As a T32 trainee and Graduate Research Assistant, I have trained on a comprehensive assessment protocol examining language abilities relative to other outcomes, trained others on the protocol, gained experience in processes related to longitudinal study (i.e., advanced statistical modeling, data collection, coding, analysis, and reliability), and pursued secondary research experiences with researchers such as Dr. Steven F. Warren, who studies mother-child relations in individuals with Fragile X syndrome.

Between my institutional doctoral training and conference activity, I was able to develop and run an independent pilot study. This entailed everything from applying for Institutional Review Board approval and developing an assessment protocol to recruiting and assessing

participants, not to mention obtaining funding. My study investigated whether low-resource minority adolescents and young adults with ASD who had extensive special education needs were testable using a standardized assessment protocol probing into language and grammar abilities, as well as nonverbal cognitive abilities. I was also interested in whether a community- and participant-centered paradigm was effective at engaging this underrepresented community in research. Results, which have been submitted to this year's Annual Meeting, showed that the paradigm was effective. Furthermore, participants as described above were mostly testable, with some caveats. While this pilot study will inform my dissertation study and programmatic research, I also hope it will contribute to the ongoing dialogue about how to engage underrepresented communities in autism research.

Overall, this letter makes it clear that I have made the most of attending the past two INSAR Annual Meetings and that they have helped further my career goals as an academic/researcher in the field of autism. I cannot overstate my gratitude at receiving a Student/Trainee Travel Award in 2018 and hope that a Student/Trainee Travel Award will make it economically feasible for me to attend in 2019.