Nomination of Dennis A. Savaiano
for the Virginia C. Meredith Professorship of Nutrition Policy

It is appropriate and a privilege to nominate Dennis A. Savaiano for a named professorship in Nutrition Science and the College of Health and Human Sciences. As Dean of the College of Consumer and Family Sciences (CFS) from 1995 to 2010, Dennis’ supportive, visionary leadership provided an atmosphere for growth that was foundational to the success achieved by the Department of Nutrition Science over the past 15 years. He moved the programs housed in CFS to a new position of national and international respect and prominence. During his tenure, the college made a strong commitment to diversity, scholarship and research, international programs and public and private partnerships, and developed new honors, scholarship, and multicultural programs. These strides have been recognized at the University level. Appointed as an Associate Provost in 2010, he led the creation of Purdue’s first Honors College and served as its Interim Dean from 2011 to 2013. In two years, he created the infrastructure of the Honors College, grew enrollment to over 700 students, initiated an Honor’s residence hall and taught an Honors class in food policy.

Dennis is now developing a Center for Nutrition and Food Policy. This Center holds promise to become the foremost source of research-based information to inform policy-makers on effective measures to combat malnutrition, both under and over nutrition, locally and globally. The Center will bring together nutritionists, economists, political scientists, agriculturalists, technologists, epidemiologists and others to develop, interpret and disseminate research-based information that supports improved nutrition locally and globally. The Center will become a catalyst for new interdisciplinary research and teaching that informs, educates and promotes global and local policies that improve nutrition. The center will also work in a collaborative network with the Global Policy Research Institute, the Center for Global Food Security, the Women’s Global Health Institute and related academic activities.

Professor Savaiano is a professor of Nutrition Science and an expert in lactose intolerance. For more than three decades his research has been directed toward understanding the enzyme deficiency that causes lactose intolerance and how to manage it in order to enhance adequate calcium intake. This work led to a patent on a prebiotic formulation using galactooligosaccharide. His work has been funded by federal and private sources. Notably, he was Principle Investigator of a $3.75 million multi-site trial in 6th grade girls from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. His work was central to the 2010 NIH Consensus Conference for public health guidelines for professionals advising lactose mal digesters. For his contributions, the Department of Nutrition Science recognized him in 2008 by induction into their Hall of Fame.

Under the leadership of Dean Savaiano, the College of CFS grew by over 450 students and increased SAT scores of admitted students by 100 points. External research funding to the college grew to the second largest expenditures per FTE faculty on campus. Research and gift funding increased four-fold on his watch. He directed a new paradigm for the way CFS programs for the Purdue Cooperative Extension Service were developed, with an emphasis on translating knowledge gained by research happening at Purdue to Indiana communities through our extension educators. Over 250,000 clients across the state of Indiana are served by CFS/HHS Extension annually. The planning and financing for
two new buildings, Hanley Hall (HDFS) and Marriott Hall (HTM), were significant milestones in his tenure as Dean.

His leadership extends beyond Purdue University. He served on the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) Board, including – Human Sciences Executive Committee, Chair (2006-2008) and representative to Agriculture Farm Bill Committee. He was a member of the Council of Administrators of Family and Consumer Sciences, American Society for Clinical Nutrition, the Institute of Food Technologists, the American Society for Nutritional Sciences and he served on the Indiana Youth Institute Board of Directors, Greater Lafayette United Way Board of Directors, serving on the Indiana Youth Institute Board of Directors, Greater Lafayette United Way Board of Directors, serving as Purdue Champaign Chairman in 2003-04 and Greater Lafayette Campaign Chairman in 2004-05. He is a Fellow of the American College of Nutrition.

It is entirely fitting that Dennis’ professional accomplishments and contributions be recognized in honor of Virginia Meredith, for she was the driving force behind the establishment of home economics education at Purdue. In 1921, as the first woman appointed to Purdue’s Board of Trustees, she championed the cause of women students. At her first Board meeting, she voted with the board to authorize construction of the Home Economics building, a building that would one day be named after her daughter, Mary Matthews. In 1934, 13 years after she pushed for construction of a residence hall for women, Purdue’s first Women’s Residence Hall (now known as Duhme) became a reality.

On behalf of the faculty, students, staff, and friends of the Department of Nutrition Science, the former College of Consumer and Family Sciences, and the new College of Health and Human Sciences, it is both an honor and privilege to nominate Dennis Savaiano for a professorship named in honor of Virginia C. Meredith.

Sincerely,

Christine M. Ladisch
Dean
College of Health and Human Sciences

Connie M. Weaver
Head and Distinguished Professor
Nutrition Science

Recommended Approval:

[Signature] 11/21/13
Timothy D. Sands, Provost Date

Approved:

[Signature] 11/26/13
Mitchell E. Daniels Jr., President Date