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Dear Members of the Committee,

Thank you for considering Dr. Brian W. Gilbert for the University of Toronto Robert Hyland Award for Excellence in Mentorship.

When I joined the Cardiology Division in 2005 as a clinician teacher, I was new to Toronto entirely. I encountered Dr. Gilbert, the SHSC Division Head then, just twice before my first day of work, both in job interviews. He welcomed me warmly, expected high standards and promised commitment to help me grow within the daunting University landscape.

He was true to his word and more. In those early days, he called me randomly on service weeks to ensure I was comfortable in my new environment. He met me early, before the day starts for most. He offered me slices of his breakfast fruit alongside a listening ear, healthy servings of career advice, and maps to navigate academic ranks and challenges. As I moved on from lecturer to Associate Professor and gained experience in other educational roles such as Site Director for the Cardiology trainees, Dr. Gilbert was unfailingly supportive through every milestone. His office was a safe place to speak freely, ignite ideas, find honest opinions, learn from mistakes, and build confidence. In my University landscape, he was and is, like the large solid oak tree at the centre...mature, strong, reliable and sheltering when needed most.

I soon learned he was central to the development of many across Toronto. I met people across the city in unexpected places praising Dr. Gilbert for having given them or a family member opportunity and guidance. I learned his career started as Divisional Chief at Mount Sinai Hospital. His history of seeing potential in junior faculty, taking them under his wing, and nurturing their careers is long. This includes Dr. Gary Newton, President and CEO of MSH, Dr. Susanna Mak, U of T DDD for Cardiology, Dr. Jack Coleman, a pillar in Adult Congenital Heart Disease and many others at MSH. His profound impact at MSH is detailed in Dr. Mak's supporting letter.

His subsequent recruitment at SHSC was critical in building the SHSC Cardiology Division today. In my first interview with him, he emphasized the importance of finding and mentoring good people first, paralleling the partnership to a strong marriage. Under this philosophy, he grew a six-person division to over twenty, with full subspecialty teams in Echocardiography, Arrhythmia, and Coronary Angiography.

The enclosed supporting letters from SHSC faculty are a few, among many, exemplifying his commitment. Dr. Gilbert's special thirty-year history with Dr. Bradley Strauss begins in PGY2, when he encouraged him to pursue Cardiology, a road that later led to advanced fellowship training in Rotterdam. On returning, Dr. Gilbert, still MSH chief, selflessly advised him to join SMH over MSH, because he truly believed it was the best career move for his mentee. Dr. Gilbert ultimately recruited Dr. Strauss, the Reichmann Chair, to SHSC, where he became Division Head. The unfailing support and wisdom Dr. Gilbert offered to Dr. Strauss during this ten-year tenure was even more precious. As a Cardiology fellow, Dr. Harindra Wijeyesundera was at crossroads between academia and community cardiology, weighing challenges of higher study against supporting a young family. Dr. Gilbert found creative options, strongly encouraging his academic passion. Dr. Wijeyesundera has since achieved national research acclaim, earning the CCS Young Investigator Award, the Heart and Stroke Distinguished Clinician Scientist Award, and a position as VP for Medical Devices and Clinical Interventions at the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technology in Health. Dr. Gilbert recognized the teaching talent of Dr. Mark Hansen, a fresh Cardiology graduate, and created a Divisional spot for him despite no pressing clinical need. Dr. Hansen's teaching contributions since cannot be overstated. As Dr. Hansen's testimonial attests, Dr. Gilbert's guidance and friendship is very much weaved into the story of his career, as it is in the stories of so many.

Dr. Gilbert's ability to mentor people advanced many innovative achievements at SHSC. He fostered relationships bringing Cardiology, Cardiac Surgery and Vascular surgery under one umbrella, the Schulich Heart Program, years before the "one heart team model" was standard of care. He guided our Divisional members, including Drs. Sam Radhakrishnan and Eric Cohen in developing innovative, life-saving programs such as the Code STEMI program (the first primary PCI program at U of T in 2007) and the transcatheter aortic valve replacement program (now the largest in Ontario and second largest nationally, realized by his perseverance and fundraising savvy). He brought Vascular surgeons, like Dr. Andrew Dueck, and Cardiac Interventionalists, like Dr. Mina Madan together, who now work side by side using complementary skills to perform contemporary peripheral vascular procedures more safely in the cardiac catheterization lab. He built a modern level III Cardiac Intensive Care Unit, transforming acute cardiac care for SHSC medical and surgical patients alike.

True to his nature of helping people shine, Dr. Gilbert has always remained dedicated to junior learners. He was the pioneer who successfully brought students and residents to rotate in Cardiology at SHSC. (The site is now an equal partner with its sister sites in the U of T Cardiology Training program and has three of its own advanced Cardiology subspecialty training programs). In spite of a demanding clinical practice and academic schedule, he always paused for learners, whether teaching medical students in small group sessions or examining Cardiology trainees in preparatory examinations for the Royal College. He reliably attended teaching rounds, stimulating discussion between staff and students. His example was a lead to be followed by the Division's teachers.

Looking back, it is no wonder that Dr. Gilbert's name is consistently referenced in gratitude by colleagues, students and patients alike. He has irreversibly shaped the Cardiology landscape at the University of Toronto. Most importantly, to me, he leaves behind the greatest gift a trusted and experienced advisor can give to a mentee... a foundation on which to grow, rich in values that embody being a good person *first*.

Thank you for considering Dr. Gilbert for this most deserving honor.

Sincerely,



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