

February 1, 2007

This is a letter nominating Ivan Markov for Outstanding Student Employee of the Year. I hope the people reading this letter will realize the contributions, uniqueness, and potential of this young man who I have come to know in the last year.

Take one male twenty-year-old college student and offer him a low paid position as administrative assistant to the director of a university program. Tell him he must work 20 hours a week, sometimes more; meet all deadlines and requests, scheduled and unexpected, even if it means extra hours on some days. He must be detail oriented and efficient. In addition, he must have excellent communication skills and people skills because he will be answering the phone and talking to a wide variety of people in person, some of whom do not always understand what one is saying and are illogical. He must also commute from the main campus to the office located on Hospital Hill by bus each weekday. The first month of work will be a trial period and his job performance will be evaluated at the end of a month to determine if he is suited for the job.

Add another job to the first and tell him he needs to work within the program itself, directly with the students it serves, as a teacher aide. Tell him he must get up early (7:30 a.m.) on Saturday mornings, report to work, exhibit a cheerful attitude, and stay on his feet until 1:15 p.m. or later. Make the job more challenging by telling him the students he will be working with have multiple disabilities or a range of disabilities, such as autism, ADD, cognitive impairments, speech impairments, eating disorders, seizures, and physical impairments. Then ask him to substitute for an instructor on his first Saturday as a TA. Assign him fifteen students he has never met. He must communicate with each student including two who know very little sign language, are deaf, non-verbal, and have low cognitive skills. He cannot physically touch these last two individuals to get their attention, guide them in learning, or direct them to the next class. Tell him you expect all the students to enjoy the class and learn something. He must create a lesson plan and objectives, which he has never done before.

Throw in a few more factors to make the position challenging. His supervisor will be a demanding, workaholic, perfectionist with high expectations of staff and very little computer knowledge. She does not accept tardiness, laziness, or absences unless the employee or a family member is dying. Finally, this employee who has had no experience working with people with disabilities and no secretarial skills must accomplish all of the job tasks and requirements using English, his second language. Will this person succeed?

Most people would say the odds were against success, but Ivan Markov, a full-time UMKC undergraduate majoring in Computer Science, has now worked successfully with the **ACED** Program at the UMKC Institute for Human Development for 11 months as Administrative Assistant, Program TA and Instructor. ACED (Adult Continuing Education for Persons with Developmental Disabilities) offers adult the opportunity to attend non-credit classes in a college setting. The Program is designed to teach independent living skills and provide life-enhancing experiences in an educational and social environment. Mr. Markov's contributions to the program have been "off the scale" and truly unique.

Uniqueness of Contribution: Mr. Markov is making a difference in the lives of many adults with disabilities. Within a week or two of working directly with the students, he was making breakthroughs that no TA or instructor had made up to that point. The two students, mentioned above, were making eye contact, actively participating in class, volunteering to help and showing emotion. One would jump up and down and exhibit happiness when he spotted Ivan the next Saturday.

As a TA, Mr. Markov helped individuals one on one as needed, helped set up classrooms, ran errands for the

teacher, guided them to the next classroom, checked students in and out for the day, connected them to their driver at the end of the day, etc., but a TA's duties do not necessarily stop there. He also listened to their personal problems, expressed interest in their lives, shared jokes with them, and interacted with them socially.

In the fall 2006 Session, he became an instructor for one of the classes and served as a TA in other classes. This is very rare for a person to advance so quickly, but he had connected with the students and was respected and well liked by the students. He also had all the qualities of a great instructor. At the end of the Fall Session, he received a 100% approval rating in all categories on an evaluation form from the students. They liked the instructor and the class. They felt they learned something new. They gave Mr. Markov's class the highest rating and they said they would recommend the class to a friend. It is unusual for a first time instructor to attain the highest ratings for all the questions.

Mr. Markov is a good role model for the students because he is a gentleman and extremely polite and courteous. He is well groomed and dresses neatly.

Mr. Markov is innovative in his approach to teaching and aiding, enthusiastic about both his Saturday job and weekday job. He is more mature than the average 20 year old and exhibits sound judgment. He is cheerful and expresses joy in learning along with the students. They sense that he is genuinely enjoying their company and is interested in them as people. His enthusiasm is contagious. He is a good listener and tremendously patient. He encourages and promotes and praises small successes.

Professionalism: An exemplary professional knows and places the mission of the program above any personal gains. Mr. Markov is committed to the ACED Program and the mission of the UMKC Institute for Human Development. He can articulate the mission of the program and the Institute to others.

W. Markov does not waste time. He is efficient and does not use his working hours to complete school work. Our office has never missed a deadline. Our response to voice mails, requests by phone, and in person is exemplary. We have a 99% efficiency rating in response time, within 24 hours, most often less.

W. Markov respects the rules and necessary confidentiality of our records and conversations in the office and workplace.

He is well organized and punctual. He accepts advice and criticism well. He is not afraid to ask for help. He is willing to redo assignments, without complaining. His mistakes in English are few. He accepts corrections in good spirit and humor. He is always open to learning - grammar, additional computer skills, administrative skills, laws, American culture and language, teaching techniques, and research and facts about disabilities. He demonstrates extremely rapid progress in acquiring new knowledge and abilities. W. Markov recognizes the priorities of this office.

He is courteous, patient, and professional on the phone and in person to the parents, care providers, other staff members and the **ACED** students. He has to deal with unusual communication situations on a daily basis. A good example of this is a student who calls and has severe stuttering problem, as well as low comprehension skills. W. Markov will patiently wait for her to ask the question. He will explain slowly and numerous times, in numerous ways so she can comprehend the answer. He is polite to her even when the conversation takes forever. He always respects others' dignity.

W. Markov has excellent relationships with other staff member at the Institute. He is willing and flexible when asked to help with another staff member's project or program. A number of my colleagues have expressed how well he fits in at the Institute and how lucky I am to have such an assistant. This past summer, he worked for other programs at the Institute.

He is expected to be responsible for all office duties when the director is out of the office. He is honest. He deals with checks and cash on a daily basis. He has my complete trust.

W. Markov is a pleasant person to work with: cheerful, optimistic, hard-working, and a good listener.

W. Markov goes beyond his job description and duties in helping others. He is currently involved in the IHD Bread Project, which involves picking up a huge amount of leftover bread donated by Panera Bakery, repackaging it, and redistributing it to needy people and organizations. He has not requested pay for many extra hours. This is but one example.

Initiative: W. Markov has suggested and put into implementation ways to streamline tasks and data management. He has exhibited initiative in improving staff management and training, program management, and made constructive suggestions about communicating clearly to **ACED** staff, care providers, parent, students, and the public.

He is sensitive to students' worries, concerns, and needs and deals with potential problems before they happen or become serious. He reads people well and therefore can react quickly to situations. He has dealt calmly with emergencies such as seizures, emotional situations, and health issues. W. Markov senses when a student needs help and checks to see if they want help, all while respecting their boundaries, wishes, dignity, and independence.

When he sees that something needs to be organized or completed in the office, he does not need reminding or prodding. He requires little or no supervision. By the end of this month, I fully expect him to have all the seasonal deadlines memorized and all the duties and responsibilities required by the program mastered.

W. Markov has demonstrated eagerness in finding resources for other teachers. He has also taken the lead in suggesting new classes for the students. He has found qualified instructors for other classes. He does not hesitate begin research for a new grant proposal, a new idea, or a new teaching technique. He has expressed interest in researching for new grants.

He has also expressed an eagerness to develop a Power Point presentation for the program for conferences and talks.

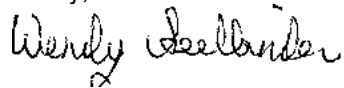
Quality of work: W. Markov's quality of work in the office and on Saturdays is excellent. Written reports are well-organized, concise, meet requirements, and are accurate. He is adept at designing various graphs, as well as skilled in Microsoft Word, Access, Excel, SPSS data, e-mail, website and a number of other programs. (See Professionalism and Initiative above.) He is a role model for other teachers and TA's on Saturdays; organized, punctual, positive, energetic, and innovative. He exhibits happiness about seeing the students and working with them each Saturday. He treats each student with respect and as an individual. The students leave with the same feelings. He is responsible as all my staff is in: increasing the students' independence, improving their skills in the workplace and at home, increasing the quality of their lives, and connecting them with the community. He carries these traits into the office as well.

Reliability: Reliability has been mentioned above. W. Markov is tenacious about finishing a task once he begins. He meets all the deadlines in the office and often takes work home with him. I have no hesitations about leaving him in charge of the office, a class, or the program. He is willing to serve as a TA with any instructor or in any subject area. I am confident that I can rely on him completely in any role in the **ACED** Program.

I submit this nomination in the hope that Mr. Markov will be recognized as the Outstanding 2007 Student

Employee of the Year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Wendy Seelbinder".

Wendy Seelbinder
ACED Program Director
UMKC Institute for Human Development