TO: Executive Committee/Department of Theatre and Dance

RE: Tenure Recommendation for ANDRE TYSON

FROM: Professor Ferne Yangyeitie Caulker-Bronson/Dept. Theatre and Dance

Let me begin by stating that I totally support Mr. Tyson's submission for tenure in the Department of Theatre and Dance. I remember when we auditioned candidates for his position. I was clearly impressed with his portfolio as an Ailey dancer and with his experience as a choreographer in his own right since his departure with Ailey.

Apart from the sheer magnitude of having danced in the Ailey Company and the wealth of experience that this alone brings to students, André has demonstrated a talent for adaptability. There is a stark cultural difference between a professional international entity such as Ailey and the dance department here in our city of Milwaukee. Our students, many of whom have not been exposed to national, international or culturally diverse influences, come to us fairly naïve, with no knowledge of what it is going to take to make it in the 'real' dance world. The dance faculty, to be effective, must bring to the classroom a sense of presence that exposes them to sometimes, harsh realities. André has high standards but I have seen him soften his approach, temper his expectations while figuring out how to, at the same time, demand the kind of excellence in his students that they deserve and will need. This phase of teaching is a learned one that we all have to figure out in varying degrees.

But, there has been another side to André that I have enjoyed watching develop. Realizing the dearth of role models for young African-American male dancers in the city, André stepped in to fill a void in our curriculum. He completed his Pilates certification, thereby offering a class in body conditioning and created another class for male dancers. His jazz classes are awesome and loved by the students. His energies outside of the department have also been stellar. He continued to work with City Ballet that specifically works with inner city youth. I feel that his work there has been crucial at a time when African-American dancers in training at their level of exposure need role models. Additionally, André volunteered his time as a creative consultant with me on the Ko-Thi Dance Company's ART IN MOTION concert at the Pabst Theater in 2000, in which he also performed. He was a joy to work with! He has also worked with me in an advisory capacity at the Company's Board meetings. At a time when Ko-Thi is striving to maintain a national and develop an international touring reputation, his contribution at the Board level is essential.

My reference to André as a role model is important, particularly as an Ailey Company alumnus. In the history of black dance in America, no modern company has had the lasting effect of Ailey's work. Black dance and culture in America has struggled for years to receive legitimacy, continuity and the ability to expose the public to its essence. No Company has achieved this as beautifully as Alvin Ailey. I cannot begin to express what it should mean to our students and community to have such a trained, experienced and ever present legacy from the Ailey Company in our midst. It is clearly visible in the magnitude of his choreography. Always thinking on a large scale, André consistently pushes the envelope from every detail of production, using other media resources, disciplines and exquisite costume designs (within budget restraints).

André has also demonstrated a capacity to notice where we are deficient in the Dance area. For example, in the area of public relations he researched, organized and

constructed the dance department's WEB site. This is no small feat given the fact that he continued to carry his full teaching and choreographing load. I am very proud of his work and feel he literally pushed the department into the 21st Century. He was not asked to do it and showed great initiative.

The transition from performing on the international circuit to teaching at an urban university can be challenging. It is also a major cultural 'shock' moving from New York to Milwaukee. I feel that in his time here he has demonstrated great potential for continued growth with his students and as a colleague.