MEMORANDUM

To: Appointments Committee Chair

From: Rusty Gage and Tanya Sharpee

Subject: Adjunct Associate Professor Appointment of Dr. Jerome Mertens

Date: May 5, 2023

We are delighted to provide an updated request with our strongest possible support for the reappointment of Dr. Jerome Mertens as an Adjunct Associate Professor at the Salk Institute. Our reappointment request is also to promote Jerome to an Associate Adjunct to reflect his promotion to this rank at UCSD. Jerome will continue to be a very valuable addition to the Institute, as he certainly has the qualities that we all seek in our colleagues and collaborators. Jerome is an outstanding researcher with incredible enthusiasm and passion for useful and creative science that is pushing the boundaries in his field. He is also extremely approachable and always generously shares his time and expertise with other scientists, from undergrad students to faculty members. If reappointed, Jerome is aware of the contributions that are expected of him going forward and he will continue, extend, and deepen his strong ties with the Institute and Salk faculty members that seek his unique expertise.

Rusty has known and mentored Jerome for over ten years and has watched him grow to become an excellent independent scientist known for his creative and high-quality work. As a postdoc, staff scientist and independent group leader, Jerome also has built strong ties with many Salk laboratories, including collaborations with the Gage, Sharpee, Hunter, Ecker, Belmonte, Panda, Dixon and former Hetzer laboratories. Jerome's passion for science began as an undergraduate student, when he was given his first research projects in the laboratory of Oliver Brustle in Germany. His early research was in the area of neural differentiation of human embryonic stem cells, and later patient iPSCs, allowing him to develop a strong foundation in human cell reprogramming methods, cellular neuroscience and dementia research. Jerome joined the Gage laboratory after finishing his PhD with Highest Honors from the University of Bonn. During his postdoctoral training, Jerome developed a strong interest in using iPSCs to study also psychiatric diseases, and established directly induced neurons (iNs) from human fibroblasts as a model to study cellular aging. He also grew a strong foundation in genome-wide analyses. Jerome supported himself with two postdoctoral fellowships. Jerome is equipped with a unique skill set to tackle challenging scientific questions, and continued his research at the Salk as a staff scientist, which he supported with a K99 Pathway to Independence Award.

Very recently Jerome left his tenure-track Assistant Professor position at the University of Innsbruck in Austria and was recruited to UCSD. Jerome is continuing to develop a compelling research program which couples his focus on stem cell and direct reprogramming biology with his background in dementia and aging biology, and with cutting-edge high throughput big data analysis technologies. In his laboratory, he and his team are developing new patient-based models to study the mechanisms that lead from normal aging to early mild cognitive impairment and eventually dementia, research the molecular interface of psychiatric and age-dependent diseases, and develop new complex culture models by combining different human cell reprogramming techniques. For this work, his young lab is supported by several research grants, including the competitive ERC starting grant.

Over the years as an independent scientist, Jerome has always been strongly committed to the Salk Institute, and now that he resides in San Diego and has moved his lab to UCSD his commitment will only deepen. Jerome continues his research collaborations on young-onset Alzheimer's disease with PIs at both Salk and UCSD, co-supervises a graduate student together with Rusty, and is actively involved in several long-term collaborative endeavors with the Gage lab. Jerome is committed to mentoring faculty and trainees, public outreach on behalf of Salk, serving on graduate student committees, consulting and fundraising.

Jerome has enjoyed exceptional training and has excelled at every stage of his career. We believe he will continue to make unique and meaningful contributions to Salk and bring in knowledge, technology, and very valuable projects. He has shown a consistent commitment to academic and scientific pursuits, and we believe he will continue to be an excellent adjunct faculty member, continuing to.

Attachments: Mertens CV, Salk Adjunct Service Form