

Confidential

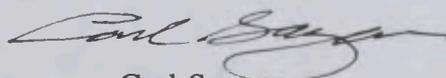
Recommendation for the promotion of Carolyn Porco to Full Professor  
at the University of Arizona

I've known Carolyn Porco since her undergraduate days at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. Her field of specialization in planetary science is quite remote from my own, but I have had ample opportunity to judge her intellect and character over the years. I've also heard her lecture, and have discussed her abilities with a number of scientists.

She is well known in scientific circles abroad, and is certainly considered a leader in her field -- partly but hardly exclusively because of her leadership of the imaging team of the Cassini Orbiter. This is a position of enormous difficulty and responsibility, requiring coordination between two space agencies and half a dozen countries, to say nothing of 20 contentious planetary scientists -- each with a separate agenda. When the NASA Administrator was contemplating downgrading or cancelling Cassini, Porco was one of the very few who were called in to spend a considerable amount of time with him, successfully explaining the scientific significance and cost effectiveness of the mission. At a meeting that I co-chaired in January 1994 on how to improve NASA's appeal to the taxpayer, Dr. Porco was quite effective -- again especially in communicating with the Administrator and other NASA officials.

You asked for a comparison of Dr. Porco with other scientists at a comparable stage in their careers. Because I know his background and credentials well, and because he is in the same field of planetary science as Dr. Porco, Phil Nicholson comes to mind. I would judge that Dr. Porco is at least as qualified as Phil was when he came up for promotion from associate to full professor here at Cornell. If I fold in Dr. Porco's Cassini leadership role and its effect on cross-fertilizing the widest range of sciences and its stimulating graduate students, I might rank her a little higher.

I've attempted to make this evaluation while conscientiously avoiding Dr. Porco's gender. Let me say, though, that speaking personally, as a member of a department with 20 some-odd faculty of whom only one is a women, were other factors equal this would be a strong point in her favor. All in all, we would leap to add Carolyn to the Cornell faculty.



Carl Sagan  
David Duncan Professor of Astronomy and Space Science  
and Director, Laboratory for Planetary Studies