June 15, 2010

Department of Homeland Security

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

Texas Service Center

Re: I-140 Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker, filed on behalf of Roy Liu-Marques, as a Professional holding an advanced degree or of Exceptional Ability in the National Interest

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter to strongly support Roy Liu-Marques petition United States permanent residence based on his contributions to the field of hurricane research and wind damage mitigation.

By way of introduction I am Stephen Leatherman, PhD. I am the Director of the Laboratory for Coastal Research (LCR) at the International Hurricane Research Center (IHRC) at Florida International University (FIU) and also served as Director for the IHRC from 1997 to 2009. My major research focus is on storm impacts on coastal areas. Previous my appointment at FIU, I served on the National Academy of Science Post-Storm Disaster Field Team, as Professor and Director of the Laboratory for Coastal Research at the University of Maryland, Director of the National Park Research Unit at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and Assistant Professor in the Department of Geology at Boston University. I am the author or editor of over 15 books and also authored more than 200 refereed journal articles and technical reports. I’ve also attended several national and international professional conferences and public workshops as an invited speaker. Given my expertise, I’ve also provided expert testimony to the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives committees on important science policy issues related to coastal storm impacts the response of the federal government. I’m also the Principal Investigator on several of the state and federal grants awarded to the IHRC to perform cutting-edge research on hurricane effects, including grants from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Florida Department of Emergency Management and State of Florida Center of Excellence. Please see the attached copy of my bio-sketch for more details. My given experience in the field of hurricane research allows me to accurately assess Mr. Liu-Marques’ research potential. [DESCRIPTION OF WRITER’S PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND AND DETAIL REGARDING EXPERIENCE, PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIPS IN COMMITTEES, SERVING ON PANELS, EDITOR/CO-EDITOR OF JOURNALS, # OF PUBLICATIONS, PRESENTATIONS, LECTURES, ETC.]

Roy joined the IHRC as a graduate student on a Research assistantship for the Laboratory for Wind Engineering Research (LWER). He joined the Center at a critical time when testing of a single fan unit for the RenRe Wall of Wind (RenRe WoW) was taking place. He then supported testing, assembly and commissioning of the 6-fan system to successfully add a state-of-the-art full-scale hurricane simulator to the list of innovative research initiatives taken by IHRC to become one of the leading centers for hurricane research and damage mitigation. During his graduate studies at FIU he became an expert on the Wall of Wind testing apparatus that together with his comprehensive study and analysis of the wind field characteristics of the RenRe WoW, deserved him a Masters degree and a unique expertise in full-scale testing for wind engineering purposes. By devising different flow management devices and techniques, Mr. Liu-Marques and the wind engineering team were able to manipulate the flow produced by the RenRe WoW to not only produce high wind velocities but also actual hurricane wind characteristics. Given the acquired expertise and benefit it would bring to the IHRC research activities, Mr. Liu-Marques was appointed a Research Scientist full-time position.

My collaborations with Mr. Liu-Marques go beyond the undertakings of the RenRe WoW. Mr. Liu-Marques was appointed by the Director of the LWER as the project coordinator for the Round 3 of the “Monitoring Surface Level Hurricane Winds in Real-Time” subproject of the largest research grant awarded by NOAA: the Florida Hurricane Alliance. This subproject supports the activities carried out by the Florida Coastal Monitoring Program (FCMP), sponsored by the Florida Department of Community Affairs (FL DCA), which takes portable weather towers to landfall locations of hurricanes. As a Principal Investigator on this grant, I’ve been able to interact and collaborate with Mr. Liu-Marques and attest his dedication to research and meticulous preparation to efficiently support the performance of the wind engineering team for this grant. His accomplishments include the coordination of the construction of a new portable tower, coordinating the multi-university endeavors of the FCMP program, and preparing reports and oral presentations for the NOAA project officer of the FL Hurricane Alliance grant. I am exceptionally satisfied with the work performed by Mr. Liu-Marques.

In light of these statements, I believe that Roy is a vital member of our wind engineering team. His expertise will help IHRC develop the new 12-fan system that will allow for higher wind velocity testing of structures and components up to 140-mph winds. The LWER and the IHRC will once again hold the leadership in full-scale hurricane simulation. Furthermore, his distinctive qualifications and character demonstrates his interest in the field of hurricane research and mitigation of wind-induced damage.

I believe that Mr. Liu-Marques is a great benefit for the U.S. hurricane research and damage mitigation efforts due to his unique expertise and proven dedication that clearly sets him apart from others in his field. His contributions in the area of wind engineering will contribute to make the prepare nation to endure the effects of hurricanes and reduce the losses from its harmful effects. He is an outstanding young research scientist and I truly recommend him for permanent residency.

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Stephen Leatherman, Ph.D.

Chair Professor and Director

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