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Dear Dr. Ballard,

Congratulations on receiving the 2016 Champion of the Ocean Award from Monmouth University and Rockefeller University.

You grew up in San Diego next to the ocean, and have talked about how growing up with the ocean inspired you to explore it. Over the years, you have passed your zeal for exploration onto thousands of students – including me.

Your research regarding the hydrothermal vent ecosystems in the ocean and exploration of mid-ocean ridges has revolutionized our understanding of life on Earth. Your conclusions and studies regarding chemosynthesis not only helped us better understand life in our oceans and redefined science as we knew it, but have also helped in the identification of extra-solar planets that may harbor life. You inspired me to create the ocean worlds exploration program in federal law to seek out life in the oceans of Europa.

It is fitting that Monmouth University and Rockefeller University have chosen to award their Champion of the Ocean Award to the man whose research has revolutionized our understanding of life on Earth and whose discovery of the R.M.S. Titanic in 1985 and the German battleship Bismarck continues to inspire students around the world. As you have said, “the age of exploration is just beginning” on our planet.

It is an honor to call you a friend. Congratulations on being named the 2016 National Ocean Champion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Culberson".

John A. Culberson
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science and Related Agencies