

Portfolio for Dr. Elizabeth Altieri for the 2018 Distinguished Faculty Advising Award

Submitted February 26, 2018

In this portfolio, I will demonstrate that I have an effective record of teaching and advising students at Radford University. I will also discuss how I meet all the criteria for the award.

First and foremost, I approach teaching and advising from an ethic of caring and have been highly influenced by the work of Nel Noddings (2003). I live by this motto- “the formation of caring relations is central in both teaching and life itself” (Noddings, 2003, p. xix). I care deeply for my students, and work to learn the experiences and challenges they bring to the table. I take the time to develop real and respectful relationships, and they trust me to share their struggles and their successes. I listen and reflect, and work with each student to acquire what they need to become teachers. This ranges from providing supports to gain organizational skills to coaching of teaching strategies to referral to and obtaining support services (Noddings, 2005). An example of this is as follows: This past fall, my colleague and I spent considerable time during supervision and office hours almost every week to support a struggling co-placed pair in our collaborative teacher preparation field experience. The difficulties stemmed from the increasing anxiety of one of the interns. This came to a head in early November. After numerous interactions Friday night and Saturday morning, she had herself transported to the emergency room. I met her there and stayed with her until she was discharged, took her to lunch, and made sure she was settled comfortably at home. I then followed up on Monday and had to advocate vigorously on her behalf to get her an appointment with the Radford University contracted psychiatrist as no follow up was arranged on her behalf by the hospital. This student has my admiration as we created a plan of intervention to get her the support she needed which she followed, and she is now experiencing success in her 2nd placement and a considerable reduction in her anxiety symptoms. I have worked with at least two students in similar mental health crisis situations per year, including students who have been sexually assaulted and students who are beginning to deal with childhood sexual abuse. I, of course, work hand-in-hand with the Dean’s Office in these cases but I have made referrals to Women’s Resource Center and private counselors. I think the attached letters of three of my former undergraduate advisees -Hernandez, Jacob and Harris – speak to the lengths I have gone to counsel, advise, nurture, redirect, encourage, and even push my students to be their greatest selves.

As the Graduate Coordinator for the Special Education Program area, I recruit, advise and support graduate students across the Commonwealth. The vast majority of these individuals are working adults, and this means that I must make and return phone calls for recruitment and either talk on the phone or through Zoom to advise in the evening and on weekends. I am a huge advocate for special education, and have put in many hours of effort with my colleagues to address the shortage in special education that plague our state. I worked with then Dean Colley and my colleague, Debbie Bays Wilbon to write, implement and administer a collaborative training grant with Virginia Department of Education to help school divisions grow their own special educators. I am also an advisor of graduate students working toward their masters and taking coursework to become licensed or add an endorsement in Special Education, Adapted Curriculum or Special Education, Visual Impairment. I am also co-PI for our VDOE grant for teacher preparation in hearing impairment and support my colleague, Karen Stinson in her coordination of that grant. I work closely with faculty at 6 other universities to manage our Virginia Department of Education tuition support grants, plan curriculum, oversee and provide instruction and problem-solve around issues related to technology, instruction and students.

I can think of no greater evidence of my dedication and hard work on behalf of students than this fact – Since 2003, I have brought in almost \$640,000 in tuition and support for graduate students in Special Education at Radford University. These funds have been used to

support aspiring teachers, and include full-time traditional students here at Radford University as well as individuals working full-time in the schools as instructional assistants, provisionally licensed teachers and teachers adding endorsements. The attached letters from Lindsay Stutsman of Lexington and Susan Morency of Lynchburg speak to the support I strive to provide to every graduate student.

I strive to share my knowledge and my passion with my students. I am a collaborator and continue to support the professional development of my former students as they become young professionals. The last two years I have presented with alumni at the TASH international conference and have used my Radford University PI recovery funds to support their travel and attendance at the conference (see vita). I am passionate about preparing excellent teachers who have a commitment to helping all children be successful in school, and who bring their toolbox of strategies to ensure that children are successfully socially and emotionally as well as academically. I bring this same belief to my work with my own students. I am willing to scaffold them to success in class and in the field, but I also must nurture the professional characteristics and dispositions so necessary for surviving the rigors of teaching.

Noddings (2005) says that young people, especially those who will be teachers, require "supervised practice in caring" and we must teach them caring through dialogue, modeling, practice and confirmation. We point a student "toward his or her best self." Here's an example: I teach seniors preparing to be teachers on Thursday evenings from 5-8. Last week after the school shooting in Florida, I decided that sometimes what you have on the instructional plan, may not be the most important lesson. So, we started class with a guided conversation on how you talk to kids when something very bad happens in the world, and how you help young children and children with disabilities understand death. My students told me that no one talked about the shooting, even mentioned the shooting, in the schools where they intern during the day, with two exceptions. One teacher told my student – "Look where this classroom is... we would be the first if such a thing happened at our school." The other was a teacher who told his class that schools are under attack and they should all be very afraid. No one said simply- "Something very bad happened in Florida yesterday. We know that's very scary for you, it's scary for all of us. We, the teachers and principals, will always do our very best to keep you safe here." But I told my students that... and then the students and I shared our experiences of being in schools on lockdown during 911 and the Virginia Tech shooting and active shooter situations. We cried together, and we talked about how we can help children come to grips with their fears and their loss through the act of making tributes and memorializing and writing cards of support. When I posted this on Facebook, an alumni of 10 years commented – "After Va Tech, I remember that you... read our class a few excerpts from the book *A Million Visions of Peace*. That meant so much to me and is a memory I always keep in my heart."

Thank you for this opportunity to apply for this award. I am deeply honored. The attached letters speak for themselves, I believe.

Noddings, N. (2003). *Caring : A feminine approach to ethics & moral education*, (2nd ed. ed.). Berkeley: University of California Press.

Noddings, N. (2005). Caring in education. *The encyclopedia of informal education*. Retrieved from www.infed.org/biblio/noddings_caring_in_education.htm

