

Award for Administrative and Professional Excellence Nomination Narrative

Merrie K. Winfrey

I am honored to have been nominated for this award. My professional philosophy is supportive behavior change. I strive to support the teaching and learning of faculty, staff, and students in the ways they need to advance the educational mission of Radford University. To change behavior, I frequently consider the framework developed by Chip and Dan Heath in their book, *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard*. The image for the framework is a person riding an elephant on a path. The rider represents rational thought. The elephant represents emotion. The path represents the situation. In order to change behavior, you have to direct the rider, motivate the elephant, and shape the path. I do what I can to get the rider and the elephant down a clear path.

My strengths are my skills of project development and management, facilitation, and organization. I try to address teaching and learning needs and wants, but also to point people in the direction of better practices. Sometimes I nudge. Sometimes I push. I offer, and try to get people to see, options and possibilities. These are some examples of where my strengths shine:

- I facilitated a series of workshops for the Chemistry Department in Summers 2018 and 2019 to assist them in re-designing General Chemistry 111 and 112 labs to make the labs more engaging, inclusive, and closely aligned with learning objectives. This project led to me assisting with the Biology Department as they revised the Anatomy and Physiology curriculum in Summer 2020.
- I developed a monthly Podcast Lunch and Learn discussion series on topics related to teaching and learning that is one of the few opportunities for discussion between faculty and staff. I curate the podcasts we listen to and facilitate discussion of them. This started in Spring 2019 and is ongoing. My portfolio has the lists for our two highest attended sessions.
- As Co-Chair of the university's Diversity and Equity Action Committee since 2018, I have planned, overseen, and facilitated the creation and soon, we hope, the adoption of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan for the university. Forty-five faculty, staff, and students contributed to the effort. I am currently meeting with each of the Senates to share the plan and gain their endorsement of it before the committee presents it to the President.

While I believe that what I do on a regular basis has an impact on faculty, staff, students, and the university, I believe the efforts of myself and my colleagues at the Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning (CITL) since March 2020 has had a big impact on the university's success during the pandemic. This is what we have done (I participated in all of the items in **bold**):

- **A week of workshops and consultations in March** to prepare for an online pivot in collaboration with our colleagues at IT, the McConnell Library, the Harvey Knowledge Center, and the Center for Accessibility Services
- **Moderation of the RU-Online Facebook group** started in March and is ongoing
- **A Resilient and Flexible Teaching (RAFT) Resources D2L site** in which all teaching faculty are enrolled
- **Weekly faculty Zoom community building meetings** in April, May, and 2 weeks in December
- **Fully online 'Our Turn' programs with CITL providing session moderation and recording** in May 2020 and January 2021
- **Two 2-week summer courses** in designing online courses (Rapid Online Course Kit)
- **A 2-week RAFT course that ran in Summer 2020 and January 2021**, enrolling a total of 81 instructors
- A July workshop series with ITS and McConnell Library

- **Two summer learning communities on the book, *Small Teaching Online: Applying Learning Science in Online Classes***
- **Multiple demonstrations and classroom assistance on new teaching technology**
- **Development and implementation of a Faculty Wellness Week** in Fall 2020
- **Four 6-hour Course Design and Syllabus workshops** in December 2020 and January 2021
- **Countless one-on-one consultations** on course design, activities, and technology

In addition to the above activities, I developed a program to keep student workers working remotely during the modified campus operations. Many of our student workers rely heavily on the funds from their campus jobs. We needed to keep them working remotely if we could, and I offered them a path.

I trained student wage employees and Veterans Administration work study students to make Word and PowerPoint (PPT) files accessible so that they can be read by screen readers. Remediating documents for accessibility is a valuable skill. This is a task that benefited both the student workers and the RU campus communities. I was responsible for training students, locating documents to remediate, reviewing their work, and helping students improve their skills, all of which required many, many hours of work on weekends and evenings for the remainder of the Spring 2020 semester.

These are the final numbers for program participants and what they accomplished:

- 37 students enrolled
- 13 students each completed approx. 3 hours of asynchronous training for accessible Word documents and PPT presentations; 3 students each completed 1.5 hours of asynchronous training
- 8 students made 121 Word and PPT documents accessible for 5 T&R faculty members, 3 A/P faculty members, and 4 offices

This is what students had to say about the program:

- "I just wanted to thank you both for giving me the opportunity to work when Radford was shut down due to the virus. I thought that the job would be hard to understand but I actually really enjoyed the experience. I am happy that I was able to learn a new skill that I can add to my resume and I was able to help the students in need."
- "I would first like to thank you for coming up with this program to have student workers keep working. I have honestly enjoyed looking through Word and PowerPoint documents to make them accessible to others."
- "Thank you! I have really appreciated this opportunity."
- "Again would like to thank you for allowing me to keep a job during this time!"

Additionally, I received a request to train staff members on making documents accessible so that they could continue to work remotely without reducing their hours. I created a second D2L training course, tweaked for the staff audience. That training is self-registration and is still available for any one with D2L access at Radford.

I believe the above narrative supports my nomination for this award, demonstrating distinguished execution of assigned (and found) professional or administrative roles, participation and leadership in university internal governance, and significant participation in special department programs.