Dr. Darryl Corey 2019 Distinguished Faculty Advising Award Portfolio Submitted 2/25/19

The criteria for Radford University's Distinguished Faculty Advising Award states that faculty candidates "must have an effective record of teaching and advising students at Radford University (RU). They should have caring and helpful attitudes toward advisees and others and be willing and available to assist advisees when needed." In this portfolio I hope to demonstrate that have met and exceeded these criteria.

Literature focusing on graduate student advising reveals the graduate student–graduate advisor relationship to be the single most important factor in graduate student success (Bloom et al, 2007). I arrived at RU in the fall of 2015 as an Associate Professor of Mathematics Education and Coordinator of the Online Mathematics Education Master's & Certificate Programs in the School of Teacher Education and Leadership and Mathematics Department. As faculty adviser for over 100 graduate students I build and sustain impactful relationships with my advisees through four core principles: 1. Caring for Students and Their Success (Bloom et al, 2007); 2. Accessibility (Bloom et al., 2007; Schroeder & Terras, 2015); 3. Individualized Advising (Schroeder & Terras, 2015); and 4. Serving as a Role Model (Bloom et al., 2007).

Caring for Students and Their Success: In my mind, demonstrating to students that you genuinely care about their academic, personal, and professional success is **the** most important factor in advising. The vast majority of students in my program are full-time in-service mathematics teachers from over 30 school districts across the Commonwealth of Virginia. I care deeply about them as individual persons who while attempting to reach the same academic goal (a graduate degree) come to me with divergent needs and challenges. I carefully listen to them to assess their needs and goals so that I understand how to successfully focus their experience here at RU. A consistent major concern is how to finance their graduate education and professional development (PD). To help with this, I pursue and have secured external funding to both lower the cost of their education and create opportunities for their professional development. Since arriving at RU, I have brought in and managed almost $310,000 in tuition support for my students in the form of over $270,000 in grant funding from VDOE and almost $38,000 in funding from Chesterfield County Public Schools. These funds have allowed students in my program to attend graduate school at a discounted tuition rate ranging from ~50% reduction to completely free tuition and fees. With additional funds students also receive free virtual PD webinars on topics they identify as relevant to their teaching. Examples include Culturally Relevant Math Teaching, Inquiry Based Math Teaching, Problem-Based Learning, and integrating open-source technology in their teaching using GeoGebra and DESMOS. Additionally they have had the opportunity to participate in a yearly 2-week long NASA summer institute and a 1-week summer virtual PD with Virginia Tech, both opportunities to learn from practicing engineers. Last fall I was able to secure $48,000 in new funds to pay our students to create and teach their own virtual PDs on DESMOS to other teachers in their school districts, a first step for many of them in becoming math or STEM leaders.

Some students need advice concerning personal issues. These issues can negatively impacted their success so I help them to work through these challenges when possible. Examples have included but are not limited to, helping students sort through health issues by using my own past experiences as a Ph.D. student dealing with a similar issue, helping students find new employment, listening to a student going through a family crisis and simply showing empathy, and how to enhance relationships with their students and families of color. Last summer during our NASA institute one student confided in me about a personal health issue. She and I talked at length how to continue in the program however I also felt in the moment she needed to know that others have been in her circumstances and still reached their end goal. I

shared with her that as a Ph.D. candidate I found out that I had kidney failure soon after starting my program. I shared with her how very difficult this time in my life was having to go for dialysis 3 days-a-week, while keeping up with my studies and parenting very young children. She saw that I had made it work and this gave her the confidence to keep pushing forward. She is on track to graduate in fall 2019. This type of advising changes lives and inspires.

Accessibility: Advisors who are not available have difficulty demonstrating that they care about their students. Graduate students value advisors who are accessible and approachable (Bloom et al., 2007; Schroeder & Terras, 2015). Because my students are online, I rarely get to meet them face-to-face. Thus communications such as e-mail, phone calls, and text messaging have contributed to my accessibility from a distance. I am readily available and immediate in my response on most days. My advisees are told that I will respond to their emails, calls, and texts within 24 to 48 hours, however, generally, I respond within the hour or at most by the end of the day. I answer emails late into the evening because I understand that my students work full-time and many of them have families and evening classes. I often get "thank you for responding so quickly" from students who seem pleased at my rapid response. With so many students in the program being this accessible is obviously time consuming. Thus I let them know responses to communications sent from Friday evening through Sunday afternoon will take longer. Taking some "me time" between Friday and Sunday provides the healthy boundaries I need to prevent burnout.

Individualized Advising: An effective advisor views each student as an individual and provides personalized advice. I individually tailor, facilitate, and review each student's progress through their curriculum and their research (Schroeder & Terras, 2015). I like to refer to our program as a "flexible cohort model" where students are part of a cohort, but can progress through the program with individualized flexibility to meet their needs. In collaboration with Dr. Roofia Galeshi, we supervise each student's action research thesis. She and I are careful to create safe environments that encourage student to take risk with their studies because this is essential to them learning more about themselves and the students they teach. To do this we have to develop relationships with and come to know and understand each student to help guide them to useful and informative research topics. While I advise a large number of students, it is important for me to understand that they are individuals with divergent needs and goals. Otherwise, we run the risk of failing to meet their academic and professional needs.

Serve as a Role Model: Graduate students learn from observing their advisor reason with them through a wide myriad of situations (Bloom et al., 2007). I am always available to discuss their professional activities, personal, or professional goals. My advocacy is particularly important when students begin to wrap up their graduate studies and seek other advanced opportunities when they graduate. I discuss and encourage students to use this program/degree to either continue their academic pursuits (through doctoral programs) or pursue other opportunities (teaching dual enrollment, teaching college courses, serving as a leader in their district, or offering consulting services) that will enhance their professional growth and their professional brand. The student letters in the portfolio share examples of this type of mentoring.

References

Bloom, J. L., Cuevas, A. E. P., Hall, J. W., & Evans, C. V. (2007). Graduate students' perceptions of outstanding graduate advisor characteristics. NACADA Journal, 27(2), 28-35.

Schroeder, S. M., & Terras, K. L. (2015). Advising experiences and needs of online, cohort, and classroom adult graduate learners. NACADA Journal, 35(1), 42-55.