

January 22, 2015

Dear Selection Committee:

We are proud to recommend Heather Davidson from the Communication Studies Department at Western Washington University for her nomination for the [REDACTED]. We were privileged to take Advocacy Through Media with Heather and we cannot say enough positive things about our experience.

First and foremost, Heather's class is unique because although it is a classroom, you don't feel like a student. Many classes become monotonous after a few weeks, but Heather's classes feel like an engaging and student-tailored environment because she interacts with and reacts to her class. Her syllabi are not cut and dry, and she changes them every quarter based on what was effective and what was not. So many teachers keep the same syllabi and the same tests for years and consider them "tried and true." But Heather knows that students in general, as well as the material she teaches, are always evolving and that her courses should reflect that.

Attending Heather's classes always feels like an opportunity, never a requirement. There is so much to be gained from her classes. Advocacy through Media was by far the most "life-applicable" class I've taken at Western. Even if you didn't go on to be an advocate for a cause, or do volunteer work; the topics we discussed in class affect everyone. Being able to think critically about the messages we receive every day, as well as being more aware, makes you a more valuable member of society.

One of the most valuable experiences in Heather's class was the service-learning component, where teams of students worked with community partners for the quarter. Seeing our efforts have a real life impact beyond the classroom and learning to work as an effective team gave us confidence in our abilities and a sense of pride that we had actually made a difference. Heather reminds us that we are not just students at Western, but active members of a larger community.

Heather's interaction with students makes it clear that she does not see us as "only students." She recognizes each individual's past experiences and the unique knowledge they bring to her classroom. She grades students based on the progress they make in her class and doesn't measure greatness for one person by what another has done. She acknowledges that every student has their own starting point and their own path to academic success.

Sometimes in college it's easy to feel like professors don't understand what we go through as students. Heather, who was a student recently herself, realizes our struggles and responsibilities. She is connected to our experience in a way that allows her to truly empathize and make us feel understood. Her door is always open, no matter how small or trivial you think your issue might be. She always

validates your questions and concerns, giving you her undivided attention until the issue is fully resolved.

In her classes Heather talks about being transparent. It's important to her that you are your true self in the classroom, as well as outside of it. She is very open about who she is and her life outside of this campus which leads students to think of her more as a real person, someone to look up to, to emulate; and as a mentor.

We wholeheartedly recommend Heather Davidson for the [REDACTED]. Heather's unique teaching style and dedication to her students makes her the definition of excellence.

Sincerely,

Lauren Wamke

Ra [REDACTED]

Kimberly A. Suss

Brittney Braun

Elizabeth Kayser

Morgan R. Chesmer

Nekeisha Ford

Michelle Bonds

Constance [REDACTED]

Dear Selection Committee:

It is with great pleasure that we attest on behalf of Heather Davidson from the Communication Department at Western Washington University for her nomination of the [REDACTED]. Heather is one of the most phenomenal educators we have had the privilege to be taught by in our time at WWU. In our quarter system we are given eleven weeks with our instructors and professors. Eleven weeks with Heather is simply not enough. She is the epitome of an excellent educator who depicts everything that students always hope to find in a teacher. Coincidentally, Heather is set apart from her colleagues in almost every way. She dresses in colors instead of shades, is open and forthcoming about whom she is and where she has been, always asks us how we are, and is always the first one to call herself out on her own mistakes. This premise of teaching is incredibly refreshing after the multitude of classes that are drawn out quarter after quarter through monotony in both voice and subject matter that we have all had experiences with. Every day in class with Heather is a different one. Her approach to teaching resonates with us as students in a way that makes us want to produce quality work, practice skills, and make her proud.

While Heather fulfills the requirements of the Communication Department in effectively teaching subject matter, she surpasses her job description when concerning her teaching methodology. Last quarter we took Communication 318: Professional Communication with Heather, and left the eleven weeks with more real-life application and confidence in our ability to perform and act professionally than any other Communication course we have taken thus far at WWU. While for many instructors and professors their view of teaching is merely just a 40-hour week responsibility, Heather could not disagree more. This lends proof to her passion for creating a cohesive, accepting, and goal-oriented classroom climate. It is our belief that her unique way of creating a comfortable classroom climate is the backbone to what makes her such a rare and special find.

A large portion of the course Communication 318 is through engagement with various organizations and individuals within the Bellingham community through service-learning. Hands on experience with people outside of the Western bubble while encompassing lessons learned in class allowed us to practice professionalism, effective communication techniques, and have the space to engage with our extended community. While there are other courses in the Communication Department that also require service-learning as part of the course curriculum, coupling service-learning with Heather's approach to the importance of cultivating a firm basis of community relationships speaks toward the kind of people that she is encouraging and shaping us to be.

There was one class meeting in particular where Heather shook the hearts of all of us sitting in her classroom. She sat us in a circle around the room, handed us a large notecard, and had us answer yes or no to a series of questions that she read aloud. The questions ranged from issues of race, age, sex, gender, socioeconomic status and identity, all taboo subjects that can be uncomfortable to talk about. On the flip side of the card she asked us to answer if we had ever been sexually harassed in our place of work, and if so, how it made us feel. While many of us could have opted out, the type of conversation that this created was one that none of us felt uncomfortable having. She then collected the cards and read each of them aloud. In a classroom of 24, there were various different types of people all of which come from different starting points in life. Out of 24 people in the class, 24 of us left class in a somber mood caused from the realization of the harsh realities that can sometimes occur in the work place. We realized and that

in one way or another each of us have been "broken" or have even done the "breaking". This somber feeling was one that allowed all of us to feel something secondary: Motivation for change. Heather's careful thought gone into this lesson plan did more than teach us a lesson on respect, it reminded us to be better people. Heather's the kind of educator that goes above and beyond what is called for and carefully creates dialogue and thought provoking material that motivates us, allows us to thrive, and gets us to think critically about the world and our actions.

Heather deserves recognition for her superb style of teaching that enables her to reach every single student wherever they are at. Her obvious investment in her students and what they are leaving 11 weeks later is one that is not overlooked and disregarded, but wholly appreciated, valued, and desperately needed in our education system. Educators like Heather are similar to that of the Empress tree. While rare and critically endangered in comparison to its counterparts, the Empress is the fastest growing tree in the world, can survive wildfire, is tolerant of pollution and not particular about soil type. When in bloom, the flowers range from pink to purple, and are intricately similar to that of the foxglove. Like the Empress, Heather puts no value in where you choose to dig your roots in, but meets you where you are at and cultivates you to want to bloom.

Warm Regards,

Halcy MSmitis

Z. R. O

Benjamin Hoge

Andri Miller

Lauren Wanke

John

Jason C

Jeff

My B. J.

John M. Salazar

John R. Kelly

Shawn Amine
awesome professor!
Zach Albert