

I would like to nominate Lyrae Williams for the Brian Young Community Service Award, created to recognize service to the college above and beyond the call of duty.

I have worked with Lyrae for many years and in a number of capacities, so I know that Lyrae ALWAYS works harder than others, regularly doing more than is required. When she chairs a meeting, she often also serves as “volunteer” secretary, taking minutes and distributing them promptly. When tasks are assigned to members of a committee, even if chairing, Lyrae takes her share or more, while also supporting others and gently reminding everyone of deadlines. Jill Tiefenthaler once described Lyrae to me as a “doer” – she gets stuff done. Jill highly valued her for that, and we all should. Unfortunately, her work often goes unrecognized, as it is almost always behind the scenes. Her work is administrative and it supports the “institution” but it invisibly supports all of us and our work.

Last year, during the challenges presented by COVID, Lyrae chaired a committee I served on – the COVID Advisory Leadership Team (ALT). She was nothing short of amazing – often preparing complicated and sensitive data for public access, dealing with concerns from every constituency of the college (students, staff and faculty), answering to the Interim Presidents who were under a lot of pressure, communicating with the Board of Trustees, and more, all while doing her “regular” job. She was on campus most days, despite the risks, often late into the night and on weekends. So many things were emergencies last year, particularly in the fall when students were dismissed from campus and we had to scramble to put together a workable response to COVID on campus – the work couldn’t wait, and Lyrae was there to do it. She was also calm and kind in the face of often emotional discussions. She always started the meetings by checking in with everyone, particularly addressing the students and making sure their blocks were going well and they were staying safe and healthy. She made the work of the committee pleasant – often a highlight of my week, stuck at home.

In sum, Lyrae’s commitment to the college is unmatched, and that was never more evident than last year. Actually, to most people, it probably wasn’t evident, but it wasn’t new – it just doesn’t often get noticed. This award would make her efforts more visible and provide a bit of the appreciation she deserves.