



2023 Sally Wellman Excellence in Teaching Award Recipient:

Maria (Mafe) Olivera-Deal

Nomination Letter

It is my great honor to nominate Maria (Mafe) Olivera-Deal for the Sally Wellman Excellence in Teaching Award for 2023. Mafe's dedication to TESOL and her English learners has truly been exemplary.

I am a professor of TESOL at the University of Central Florida in Orlando, where I met Mafe in 2008 when she entered our MATESOL program. Because she was such an excellent student, she was awarded one of only two Teaching Assistant positions in her second year. Here I got to know her well as a TA in one of my TSL 3346, Introduction to Teaching English as a Foreign Language, a course for undergraduate students considering teaching English abroad. Because of Mafe's teaching experience with PreK, 1st grade, and 4th grade in Colombia, she was perfect to help teach this EFL teacher-training course. I saw first-hand her dedication to the students in this course.

Here I offer one undergraduate student's course evaluation, which is representative of what many students wrote:

"During the Fall 2009 semester, I had the great pleasure of working with Mafe Olivera inside and outside of the classroom. I've come to know her through TSL 3346, a new experience-learning course for which she was the TA. Mafe has repeatedly offered her support to students outside of the classroom by participating in extracurricular events and activities. When the students of TSL 3346 hosted an off-campus recreational event (American bowling) for international students, Mafe was there every step of the way to offer her support (even helping with carpooling). Additionally, I was one of a handful of students from her class to volunteer to speak at a mini academic conference. For many of us, it was our first time speaking in such an environment. Mafe used her experience to help us prepare a relevant presentation we were comfortable with, and showed up early to help us prepare. In all of my experience at UCF, I haven't witnessed such

involvement in a course by a TA as Mafe Olivera has throughout the entire semester."

After graduating, Mafe moved to Washington, where her ESL career blossomed. In June 2010, she started as an adjunct teaching vocabulary. With her K-6 background, she then spent several years as an ELL Specialist at three elementary schools in the Kent area. After that, she taught K-8 Spanish in Bellevue. In 2014, she started her career as an ESL Instructor at Lake Washington Institute of Technology. Mafe continues to work there until today, where she is now an Associate Professor and Department Chair for the HS+ program.

I am so incredibly proud of Mafe's involvement with our profession. She has always been the kind of person who goes above and beyond with her students. Her many years of hard work in helping so many students learn English and thereby get solid jobs and enjoy better lives in our community make Mafe so deserving of this award and recognition. She is an example of the impact that ESL teachers can have on the community.

Keith Folse

University of Central Florida