

## **Sally Wellman Excellence in Teaching Nomination letter for Rebecca Hagensen**

"English language teachers learn to be like ballet dancers, always stretching and reaching, always turning and trying to be grace and gentility personified..." This quote from Sally Wellman's 1991 speech immediately brought to mind my colleague, senior adjunct professor Rebecca Hagensen.

In the time that I've known Rebecca, our program and teaching community has had to pivot repeatedly and unexpectedly. I work with amazing faculty - but among them all, Rebecca stands out as someone who truly epitomizes grace: compassionate to her core; deeply generous; endlessly positive; someone who puts other people, especially students, at the center of everything she does, all with gracious good humor.

I met Rebecca in Fall 2019, when we became co-instructors for a 16-credit I-DEA class. Alternating nights four nights a week is an intricate instructional dance; Rebecca demonstrated her skills as a collaborator and a communicator from the start.

Our Winter 2020 class ended abruptly with the start of COVID. Rebecca was a department-wide leader in the sudden pivot to online courses: innovating and remodeling our course, sharing out new tools and ideas as we piloted them. She was instrumental in devising a system to loan our IDEA class laptops to any students in our programs who couldn't otherwise take classes. Throughout the pandemic, she met with students to loan the laptops and show how to log in to campus accounts, Canvas and Zoom.

Rebecca's calm professionalism while navigating those chaotic years was inspirational: checking on students who stopped attending, helping students navigate vaccine eligibility, even helping students get food when they had to isolate and had no local family. She demonstrated a keen talent for rapidly developing materials to address hot-button issues: George Floyd, elections, and other events affecting our global classroom. Rebecca excels at providing vocabulary, context, and a classroom culture that allows students to participate in discussion and develop critical thinking skills.

Since the pandemic, our program has faced serious challenges. Rebecca continues to lead with grace and positivity. My inbox frequently lights up with well-crafted resources and assignments relevant to my students. She has helped bring back our ESL graduation, celebrating students and honoring their achievements with their families. She utilizes her technical savvy to compile a "Congratulations" video with messages from teachers throughout our program. She is currently collaborating to revise and restore

our popular "Preparing for Work" courses. I rarely attend a training or conference where I don't meet someone who speaks with enthusiasm about knowing Rebecca.

My brainstorming notes from preparing this nomination say it all: Integrity Positivity Collaboration and collegiality Generosity - good ideas, identify who else can benefit Passion for teaching - and for learning! Put students at the center of everything you do: Dedication, Inspiration, Grace.

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