

Student Employee of the Year Nomination:

Students Professionalism

Rebecca began working with the Mathematics department in August 2011, long before I joined the department in Fall 2013. From discussing Rebecca's work with senior staff, Rebecca has continuously displayed a strong work ethic and commitment to professional and customer service, showing initiative and the ability to think critically across a number of tasks. We would like to nominate Rebecca for her dedication to the Mathematics department throughout her time with us, and particularly for the extraordinary way she has stepped up in the past three months to help with a specific deficiency in our department. In December 2014, our Graduate Admissions Coordinator, left our department to pursue opportunities elsewhere, and we were left without anyone to handle graduate admissions in the midst of our busiest time of the year. Being familiar with the math department and how operations proceeded during the Spring semester, Rebecca was able to pick up the task of graduate admissions very quickly. My comments regarding her qualities all reflect upon her incredible assistance with the admissions process.

To address Rebecca's professionalism, Rebecca is warm and friendly with all staff members. She has a positive attitude and quickly responds to staff, faculty, and student queries with the same level of professional courtesy. Due to the demands of my own position, I have been able to spend any substantial amount of time in assisting with graduate admissions. The bulk of the work has been completed by Rebecca under our graduate chair's supervision. It is a great relief to both Dr. Okten (our graduate chair) and myself that we can trust Rebecca to work independently, thoroughly, and professionally in handling prospective student applications. She has also shown patience and understanding in dealing with prospective students' technical issues, often when email is the only method of communication; she has been a great help with both us and for those students who need additional help in navigating the admissions process.

Initiative

The fact that Rebecca stepped up to fill the Admission Coordinator's absence speaks volumes of her initiative. I've included some words from the graduate chair on her work:

"Rebecca filled in the Graduate Admissions Coordinator position when our previous admissions coordinator resigned in December. From December until the end of January is the busiest time of the year for the admissions coordinator since most of the applications are received during this time. Moreover, January 15 and January 30 are two critical deadlines for graduate applications, the first for consideration for university fellowships, the second for department TA offers.

Rebecca had to learn very quickly, and she only had a few days of shadowing before the admissions coordinator left. She worked over the weekends and during the holidays to complete her training on various duties of the admissions coordinator. And she did an absolutely fantastic job! I was bracing myself for mishaps, instead, Rebecca performed like a seasoned admissions coordinator, and performed her duties in an excellent way!"

The Mathematics department is unique in that we have a separate departmental application in addition to the university application. As documents come in, Rebecca also showed initiative in organizing and filing documents in a new way accessible to both myself and the graduate chair, while also making the process more efficient in keeping up with new and incoming application materials. Rebecca also showed initiative in identifying students for a fellowship we had not previously nominated students although we had a small number of eligible students. She also contacted FSU IT for a number of technical issues and resolved them for the student, which was particularly appreciated by international applicants who were unsure of what resources they needed to fix the issue.

Critical Thinking

As for critical thinking, Dr. Okten has more to say: "Rebecca discovered an applicant was sending documents from a questionable email address. She quickly acted on the problem: she contacted student's reference letter writers to authenticate the letters. She also realized that there were other applicants from the same university who used official email addresses. She explained me the situation, and pulled the applicant off our database, until the letters are authenticated. I was impressed by her initiative, and her analysis of the situation, considering the fact that it hasn't been even two months since she started in this position."

After learning how to proceed with questionable materials, Rebecca has been able to work with minimal supervision and has done well with managing and improving our admissions process. She used her judgment to contact faculty members if an applicant was missing one last letter of recommendation, and was able to complete applications in a timely and professional manner. While the bulk of the application is always the student's responsibility, Rebecca showed a willingness to work with both the student and faculty involved in the recommendation letter process to ensure that all possible materials were received. In the above anecdote from Dr. Okten, Rebecca also showed discernment in deciding which letters of recommendation needed to be resubmitted on letterhead, from an official email address, or were forgeries, in a manner respectful of all parties involved but with a firm insistence on authenticity.

Customer Service Excellence

Throughout all of our examples, you can see Rebecca's excellence in customer service. These comments are not exhaustive of all she has done for us; there's no way to really account for her extraordinary performance in responding to prospective student queries, to faculty requests in evaluating applications, to students checking in on their status, to creating formulas for ranking and evaluation, and working with our graduate chair daily to ensure that the department is maintaining and improving the admissions process. Our success in hitting deadlines, maintaining our reputation for excellence, and creating a pleasant atmosphere in general for a process that many students find stressful and intimidating is entirely due to her presence. Nominating Rebecca for this award is the least we can do to recognize her service in our department. In not nearly enough words, it is my pleasure to recommend Rebecca as FSU's Student Employee of the Year.