

Katherine Sanchez
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I am nominating Amy Derringer because without her influences on my collegiate life I would not be the person I am today. I first met Amy in 2013 when she interviewed me to be a site leader for an alternative spring break trip through the Center for Community Based Learning at the University of North Florida. Amy was my trainer/supervisor and one of the faculty partners on that year's trip to Washington, D.C. (where we learned about poverty and homelessness in America). I went on to work with her the next year as a site leader: team lead, a position she created to give me an opportunity to further develop my leadership skills. In this position I assisted with site leader training development and lead a few of the trainings. Through working with her in these roles Amy taught me a lot about what it means to be a leader, helped me realize my passion for social justice, and made me a more mindful citizen. With her guidance I gained confidence in my ability to lead reflective conversations, manage group dynamics, and realized I could positively influence the lives of my peers.

Amy holds the non-religious identity of atheist and I believe an impact this identity might have on her is courage. The trip to Washington was interfaith and the question of how our religious or non-religious identity impacted our desire to serve was discussed during reflection. There is a stereotype that people with non-religious identities somehow lack morals or a sense of civic duty. In fact, I witnessed this stereotype on the Washington trip when a student on another spring break trip from a Christian college asked if he could sit in on one of our reflections to see how we reflected as an interfaith group with non-religious participants. The UNF student's and faculty who participated on this trip ranged from Christian to Muslim to Mystic and I believe it took courage to share how a non-religious identity, such as atheism, impacted Amy's desire to serve coming from a culture that stigmatizes such identities. Amy has strong values that she has instilled in me throughout the two years she directly supervised me, and possesses a moral character that I seek to emulate.

Without Amy's positive influences I would not have discovered my passion for helping others and my community, I would not have had a role model that taught me how to be reflective of my actions, and I would not have been challenged to draw out the best in myself and my peers. I would like Amy to know that her mentorship has shaped the civically engaged person I am today and that I am truly grateful for all she has taught me. I want her to know that I could not imagine my college career without her challenging me to be a role model, and the best version of me I could be. I look forward to many more years of mentorship and friendship.