

# Outstanding Academic and Student Affairs Administrator Award Nomination

Submitted by members of the Student Affairs Division

It is with the highest esteem we nominate Anne Johnson, Associate Vice President of Student Affairs at Dakota County Technical College (DCTC), for the Outstanding Academic and Student Affairs Administrator Award. Anne has spearheaded positive changes in the Student Affairs Division which has resulted in increased student enrollment, retention, and success.

When members of the division learned of this award and shared the idea of nominating Anne to others, there was immediate enthusiasm and support, division- and college-wide for the nomination. Student Affairs team members were excited to learn of an opportunity to formally show our respect and gratitude for Anne's leadership and her exceptional contributions to DCTC. It is her drive, resilience, positivity, commitment to improving the student experience, and respect and care for others that make Anne Johnson the best candidate for this award.

Anne consistently demonstrates the leadership characteristics essential in an administrator role to bring people together and empower them to work toward a shared purpose and common goal: the success of our students. Anne fosters collaboration, open communication, a commitment to excellence, empowerment of others, and humility. Following are examples of Anne's leadership in the award criteria categories.

## **Criteria 1: Creativity or innovation in meeting the emerging needs of students**

Anne brings creativity and innovation to the Student Affairs division not only through her own ideas based on her experience and research, but also by charging the division with challenging the status quo and thinking in new and different ways, with student success at the forefront. Anne is always open to new ideas to improve service to students, programs, and the student experience at DCTC, and she challenges "we've always done it this way" thinking.

The most significant innovation Anne has overseen to meet the needs of students was revising DCTC's New Student Orientation. Revising orientation had been a discussion point for many years prior to Anne taking on her role in Student Affairs. Anne noticed the opportunity to improve this aspect of the student experience immediately when she began her Student Affairs role, and our new model was in place in less than a year of Anne leading the division (see attached supporting material). Anne has been an advocate for initiatives with the Blue Knights athletics program, supporting the success of our most diverse group of students and often most unprepared for higher education (see attached supporting material).

## **Criteria 2: Commitment to professional development of faculty and/or staff**

One of the reasons Anne is an outstanding leader is that she does not seek credit for her work and accomplishments. Instead, Anne consistently shows she values her employees by providing them with leadership opportunities, valuing their work, and recognizing their accomplishments. Her leadership fosters a culture of engagement and collaboration, and inspires us to be better team members—emulating her example. She seeks opportunities for her employees to develop their leadership skills to support their professional growth. However, the accomplishments of her employees would not be possible without her foresight and the administrative support she provides to help initiatives gain traction.

Anne is committed to providing opportunities for staff development for her employees, helping them meet the emerging needs of students. She implemented an annual Student Affairs Division retreat in the summer and often coordinates additional sessions as needed or brings speakers to our weekly division meetings. Topics have included Strengths Based Leadership, Intercultural Development Inventory, Appreciative Advising, Mental Health 101, undocumented students, supporting veterans, supporting the LGBTQ+ population, and empathy. She has also co-coordinated a cultural competency series beginning this fall.

DCTC is a smaller metro campus, thus there are not a lot of opportunities for upward growth in the Student Affairs Division. Turnover in Student Affairs has decreased since Anne began leading the division. Anne recognizes that employees need challenges to stay engaged in their role. She encourages employees to pursue professional development opportunities by attending conferences, giving presentations, continuing their education, and leading committees or initiatives to keep learning, developing, and remaining engaged in their important work.

## **Criteria 3: Demonstrated leadership in college/university and community affairs**

Anne demonstrates effective leadership through open communication, encouraging collaboration, and accountability. Anne's open and transparent communication style was evident from her first day overseeing student affairs. She implemented weekly Student Affairs division meetings for all employees which helped break down silos and ensure information was shared and transparent across student affairs departments.

Anne has gone above and beyond to support our student-veterans. She championed the initiative for a larger Veterans Resource Center to be used by veterans, current military, and their family members. The number of monthly visits have tripled in the new center. Anne supports, advocates, and initiates new DCTC veteran and military friendly policies, such as waiving the transcript fee for veterans. Prior to Anne's leadership, DCTC ranked [#15](#) on Military Times Best Technical Colleges for Veterans List in 2015. Under Anne's leadership, DCTC climbed to [#12](#) in 2017, [#7](#) in 2018, and [#6](#) in 2019. She was also awarded a Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Challenge Coin in 2018 by DCTC's Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Committee for her support of the military community.

#### **Criteria 4: Ability to generate extramural funding for academic or student affairs programs**

Anne has secured more than \$6 million for DCTC and Inver Hills Community College (IHCC) through successful grant submissions. Anne wrote the application for the Title III Grant for DCTC and IHCC, which supports the success of adult learners. Thanks to Anne's work, the grant was awarded, securing \$3,084,000 for the colleges over 5 years. Anne also found and pursued the E3 STEM Grant (Exploration, Education and Employment in STEM) for DCTC and IHCC securing \$2,990,000 over 4 years. Anne got the right people at the table and was instrumental on the college side of the grant at the same time, working closely with the high school side of the grant making connections with District 196.

#### **Criteria 5: High level of administrative ability, demonstrated by effective responses to institutional challenges**

In Anne's time overseeing Student Affairs, there have been many initiatives from the system office, Higher Learning Commission (HLC), and college leadership she was charged with implementing, such as Advising Best Practices, ensuring students complete the sexual assault prevention modules, and creating a Strategic Enrollment Management plan. Anne's implementation of these initiatives has never been with the mindset to "check a box." Rather, she brings them to her staff and challenges us to review practices and research related to the initiatives, seeks our input on implementing them, and provides professional development opportunities to equip us in successfully implementing the initiatives. Anne follows a continuous improvement process with initiatives and has the expectation of her staff to do the same. Anne ensures we are building upon our work and constantly looking for ways to improve. For example, as a result of Advising Best Practices and Appreciative Advising Conference, we learned that students who get suspended are highly unlikely to return to college and be successful. Thus, with Anne's guidance and support, the Bounce Back program was recently created, a program focusing on the success of students in warning status, to aid in preventing them from getting to suspension status (see attached supporting material).

A challenge Anne has faced while in her position is responding to declining enrollment at DCTC. With Anne's foresight, a Director of Admissions & Recruitment position was added and other staff positions were restructured with organizational efficiency and high-quality service in mind. Under Anne's leadership, DCTC's enrollment has increased or been flat the past two fiscal years, when our sister colleges were seeing decreased enrollment. Anne has shown a high degree of innovation and administrative ability navigating staffing needs amidst budget cuts. When there is turnover in the division, she thinks carefully about the needs of the division and college before posting the position again. She considers the big picture and long-term impact of each position, not just filling the position to manage the day-to-day work in front of us. Anne has a talent for putting people in the right positions to maximize their abilities and strengths, leading to overall higher efficiency and effectiveness in the division. She takes time to ask the team what they need. She listens to what is being said and synthesizes a solution. One of these solutions was to create a new position, Communications Specialist, to support advisors and financial aid staff by managing phone calls and emails. Because of this position, response times to students decreased and advisors have been able to devote time to advising students using the Appreciative Advising model.

#### **Criteria 6: Record of publications or other contributions to the field**

Under Anne's leadership, DCTC's New Student Orientation & Registration model was awarded Minnesota State's Innovative Student Affairs Program Award in 2018. Additionally, she supported her staff in presenting the model at the 2018 ASA conference and 2019 HLC conference. It is a testimony to Anne's leadership that the presentations were a result of her leadership but she did not seek the spotlight for the work. Instead, gave the opportunity to present on the model to her employees to foster their development. Additionally, Anne serves on the Board of American Association of University Women (AAWU), and is a trained HLC site evaluator.

#### **Criteria 7: Demonstrated support by fellow administrators, faculty, and students**

Anne is well-respected among colleagues and students. She collaborates and maintains open communication with others, and strives to make decisions in the best interest of our students and college as a whole. She is professional and sets a positive example of leadership for everyone at DCTC. Letters of support from administrators, faculty, students, and employees in the Student Affairs division are attached as supporting materials to this nomination.

It is for all the above listed reasons and those noted in the supporting materials that we believe Anne Johnson is an outstanding candidate and most deserving of this award. Thank you for your consideration.