COMMITTEE ON DISTINGUISHED CAMPUS SERVICE
NOMINATION FOR THE 2020-2021 DISTINGUISHED CAMPUS SERVICE AWARD

Professor Tuppett Yates

The Committee is honored to nominate Professor Tuppett Yates from the Department of Psychology as recipient of the Campus Distinguished Service Award for the Academic year 2020-2021. Professor Yates is a developmental psychologist who studies the mechanisms of positive and problematic adaptation to adversity in order to help protect and enhance the resources and strengths of individuals, families, and communities in the face of challenges. Her service to the university is reflected in her selection as Psi Chi Mentor of the Year and Honors Program Mentor of the Year Award in 2009. She is the Psychology Department’s Graduate Advisor for Recruitment and Admissions, and Chair of its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. At the university level, she is co-chair of the Human Subjects Research Board and a member of the Strategic Planning Committee for Contributions to the Public Good and a member of the Graduate Academic Integrity Committee. Nevertheless, her nomination for the Campus Distinguished Service Award rests chiefly on her astounding work on behalf of the UCR Guardian Scholars program.

Guardian Scholars programs serve emancipated youth without family who have aged out of the foster care system, helping them negotiate the university application process, survive college and obtain a degree. Professor Yates founded UCR’s program in 2008 as the second UC campus to establish one and serves as its Director. The program began with three Guardian Scholars and now supports 34, who receive academic and financial aid advising, small grants, mentoring relationships with faculty and staff and a supportive community. In 2015, Professor Yates founded the Office of Foster Youth Support Services, which includes a university-funded staff member and serves the approximately 150 former foster youth on campus.

As the Director of the Program, Professor Yates has developed relationships with local social service providers and UCR faculty, staff, and administrators and has built relationships with foundations and donors. She negotiated the creation of 8 endowed scholarships, a wellness grant and annual donations from the In-n-Out burger foundation, United Way and others. Indeed, over the past 12 years she has raised well over a million dollars in support of the program.

Yet Professor Yates work begins even before students come to UCR. In order to encourage foster youth to think about attending college, she attends outreach events at local high schools and events for foster youth; fields phone calls from youth and foster parents interested in UCR, helps them through the application process and works with UCR admissions to make sure that emancipated youth are identified and that their applications are appropriately reviewed.

For Guardian Scholars on campus, Professor Yates provides academic advice, ensures that they receive guidance on navigating financial aid and talks with each Guardian Scholar, in person or by phone on a regular basis. She sends them birthday greetings, works to understand their strengths and weaknesses and, in general, works tirelessly to support them. The program pairs every Guardian Scholar with a faculty mentor in their major, offers a for-credit seminar series and organizes monthly get-togethers. Professor Yates helps coordinate a family-style dinner at a supporter’s home over the winter holidays but those who have nowhere to go are welcome into her own home.
Professor Yates’ work has been recognized nationally with an award from the Aging Out Institute, statewide by the California State Assembly and locally by the Riverside County Fair Housing Office. But perhaps even more impressive are the testimonials from Guardian Scholars themselves. A small sampling: “She is a mentor who helped me stay on track and be realistic about my trajectories, such as advising me on my personal statement, my path to medical school, and encouraging me to meet the goals I would have thought impossible when I was younger. Since my time with the program, I have become a UCR alumni and a medical student at UCR school of medicine.” “I first met Professor Yates in 2009. Professor Yates not only welcomed me into the Guardian Scholars program with open arms…she helped guide me through undergraduate and law school. And when I failed the bar examination in 2015, Professor Yates was there to help and support me through one of the toughest moments in my life. I can honestly say that without Professor Yates' guidance and support, I would not be an attorney today.” And finally, “My first year alone was a whirlwind…I fractured my ankle in the Recreation Center…and not moments later Tuppert came walking up the steps of the gym. …After the usual, “What did you do?”, Tuppert asked a complete stranger to borrow his scooter so she could “scooter” me to the medical center.

Professor Yates is a remarkable asset for UCR’s Guardian Scholars and therefore for the campus as a whole. The Committee finds her more than deserving of the 2020-21 Campus Distinguished Service Award.