

April 15, 2019

Student Outreach Award Committee:

I am humbled to have been nominated for the 2019 Student Outreach Award by the University Senate Members and Administrators. It is with respect to the nomination that I share a part of my Tech story with you.

My journey at Louisiana Tech started long before I ever began as a student. I follow a long line of educated women starting with my great—grandmother, Lillie Leona Driggers Mall, who graduated in 1911 from Louisiana Industrial Institute. My grandmother- Mildred Mall Dickson graduated in 1935, and my mother- Jane Dickson Boone, in 1967. I was honored to have followed behind as a fourth generation graduate in 1995. I share this bit of history with the committee to explain why family...particularly Tech family... is more than just a phrase to me. I also share it because I want the students that I encounter to know that regardless of blood relatives, each student is family to me. I want to be a part of their Tech story: *their* Tech family.

While an undergraduate at Louisiana Tech, I began working as a student employee in February of 1992. I worked my through graduate school and was hired full-time once I completed my Master of Science degree in the Spring of 1997. I married my high school sweetheart and we moved to south Louisiana in 1998. We returned to Ruston and I was re—hired by Residential Life in February of 2000; I have been back at the University ever since.

For the next 19 years, I had the opportunity to serve the University, students, and parents in a variety of ways. I supervised student employees, graduate

assistants, and coordinators on day-to-day activities. Some of my favorite tasks were going to the Residence Halls and visiting with residents. Other high points were interviewing students to serve as staff members for our department. However, above everything else my favorite thing to do on a daily basis was to speak personally with students to find a connection with them: a bond that would help us develop relationships by helping to better understand cultures and moral compasses. I have valued my time spent with students over the years and grown to love quite a few! I am the proud college mom, also known as “Momma Mel” to many a Bulldog. Whether it was having a student over to eat supper at my home or getting to the bottom of a roommate conflict, I was far more blessed by these students than I could have ever imagined.

In 2014, I had the opportunity to start a new program from the ground up and work with students in more of a joint Student Development and Academic Enhancement setting: the Bridge to Bulldogs. The venture allowed me to work with students and families by recruiting students that thought they could not be admissible to the University and creating relationships with them sight unseen. It also allowed me the opportunity to build a relationship with faculty members and work with the academic side of the house. This part of the process has been the most intimidating to me for various reasons. One of those was because we have some incredible faculty members who are extremely talented and highly knowledgeable in the field of mathematics (of which I am not). I really struggled at what I believed to be the best way to approach such colleagues. Let me just say this: WOW! This group of faculty and administration took the time with an already busy schedule and course load to meet with me regularly to discuss how we could better serve students both educationally and support their overall well being.

My favorite part of my job is the mentoring component. The Bridge to Bulldogs Program requires several extra steps that regularly admitted students do not have to follow. The specified coursework must be adhered to, but in addition, each student must maintain hours of tutoring as well as weekly visits with me. My goal during these meetings is not merely to see how they are doing academically, but also to make every effort to connect personally with these students. I want to know about their families and what they miss about from home while at college. I believe that in many cases when students can talk about things and reminisce, it doesn't make them quite as sad. It's like looking back on good memories or happy thoughts and smiling. On the same token, my students are free to share with me about times in their lives that they DON'T want to repeat and long to grow from past mistakes; a chance to address "the elephant in the room" and move on. Whatever scenario is presented, my students have the chance to be in a place where they can be comfortable, know that some tough questions may be asked, but leave knowing that someone cares about their inmost being. I know that all students are not going to have the same experiences or be cut from the same mold. I do know, however, that all students deserve for me to be kind, caring, and committed to helping them become productive citizens of our University and world.

I am proud to be both an alum and employee of this University. I am also looking forward to adding more students to our Tech family. Thank you for the opportunity to share my story with you.

Kindest Regards-

Melanie B. Peel

**NOMINATION:**  
**Melanie Peel**  
**Director of Students in Transition**

Louisiana Tech University is home-away-from-home for thousands of college students, and even though it's college, Tech is a special kind of "home." Ruston, Louisiana is so much more than just a college town, and it's people like Melanie Peel that make this statement an everyday reality. Melanie Peel, a Ruston native and Louisiana Tech graduate, strives to change the lives of college students by encouraging, loving, and overseeing that each student's success story begins and ends with the same mindset-- "I can!"

During my highschool career, I struggled with math, and I knew that I did not have the scores to be accepted as a Louisiana Tech Bulldog. With much time, motivation, and work, my scores steadily increased but never quite reached the needed goal. October twenty-sixteen-- I remember it as if it were yesterday-- I received a letter from Melanie Peel that I was going to be conditionally accepted into Louisiana Tech through efforts with the Bridge to Bulldogs Program. Even though Bridge to Bulldogs is a fairly new addition to Louisiana Tech, it is what helped kickstart my college career as well introduce me to Melanie Peel. She assured me from the very beginning that Louisiana Tech would be my home-away-from-home, and she was so right! Bridge to Bulldogs would not be the same if it were not for all of the time, effort, and insight that she provides. Her belief in me to succeed is what, ultimately, made the difference in my college career. Likewise, she helps an unimaginable number of students each year by helping them see that their best can only be attained with a strong work ethic and a positive attitude. Melanie Peel continuously tells her Bridge students that the Bridge to Bulldogs Program is much more than a program... it's a family! As with everything at Louisiana Tech, community is its strongest attribute, and it's carried on year-to-year by the faculty and staff at Louisiana Tech but especially by Melanie Peel.

Last summer, I was given the opportunity to serve alongside Melanie Peel as a Bridge to Bulldogs Mentor, and I was granted a front row seat to the glory that is Melanie Peel. She welcomes every student as if they are her own son or daughter; she welcomes them home in such a life changing way. Moving away from home is never an easy task, but thankfully Tech has great faculty and staff such as Melanie Peel that makes moving away seamless because living at Tech and attending Tech is such a dream!

The connection that Melanie Peel and I share stems from my acceptance with Bridge to Bulldogs, and I could never repay her for the kindness and love that she bestows on me each and every day at Louisiana Tech. Our connection is just one out of the hundreds that she has from years before me. It is people like Melanie Peel that deserve praise, honor, and awards for all of the lives that she has touched. Let it be known, Melanie Peel is the best of the best, and she is an asset to the students, faculty, and community at Louisiana Tech University.

April 24, 2019

To Whom It May Concern,

Melanie Peel is considered to be not only a boss or mentor but has come to be a cherished friend to me in my five years of knowing her. She has been such a huge blessing in my life as a faculty member that I have come to love and trust like I would family.

When I think of the kind of woman Mrs. Melanie is, there are so many things that stand out. She is without a doubt one of the most loyal faculty, never ceasing to show her spirit and represent Tech in a positive light. She is an extremely hard-working employee, dedicating time in and outside of the office to building a program that benefits incoming students with an opportunity to attend the school they want but couldn't otherwise attend. I think that what makes her an outstanding employee that more than qualifies her for this award is that she so fiercely believes in enriching the lives of students who needed the extra time and attention to understand that they are wanted here and have a home with us. I will never fully understand what that woman is made of, but it is good. I will forever consider her a college mom because when she invests in you, which she does to everyone who walks through her doors, you'll feel like you're one of her children because she loves that much. She did that very thing for me five years ago, which allowed me the opportunity to attend my dream school and I have never left.

As for her relationship with faculty and departments throughout campus, she is loved by all. She has an outstanding work ethic and is a great communicator. Her hospitality is incomparable and she is always a great help to others. She is also very committed both on and off campus. She serves her community well and makes a huge impact on anyone that she meets.

Without Mrs. Melanie, Louisiana Tech would not have been possible for me. She is everything that the 12 tenants of Tech encompass and more. She is such a proud believer in the mission of Louisiana Tech and so deserving of this Student Outreach award.

If I can be of any other assistance, please do not hesitate to reach me at [kpb009@latech.edu](mailto:kpb009@latech.edu).

Sincerely,

Paige Babineaux  
Louisiana Tech Class of '18

April 16, 2019

Louisiana Tech University

Ruston, Louisiana

University Senate Staff Committee

To Whom It May Concern:

I write this letter today to pledge my full support in nominating Mrs. Melanie Peele for the Student Outreach Award. I will say upfront that there is not enough ink nor space on this paper to write down the impact and dedication Mrs. Peele demonstrates in her job duties with Louisiana Tech.

I first came to know Melanie while she and I both worked in the Housing Department in the early 1990s. She was always my go to person when I needed something from within the Housing office and I knew if she answered the phone what I needed was going to be taken care of by her.

Skip to last Spring as my son was about to begin his time at Tech and needed to admit under The Bridges to Bulldogs program. What comfort I found in knowing he would be under her wing as he transitioned from high school into college life. She went above and beyond in preparing not only him but myself during those summer months and welcomed him to Tech with open arms.

Since then, she has talked me off more ledges regarding my son and his duties as a student. She has treated him as if he was her own and more than once gave him a dose of tough love. This goes above and beyond her standard responsibilities to not only deliver quality service to her students but to their parents as well. If she didn't invest in her students like she does, they wouldn't turn out half as successful as they are while under her supervision.

I cannot tell you how many times I have heard my son tell me how tough she has been on him and in the same breath tell me how much he loves her for it. As a mother, one cannot feel more comfort knowing that her child has someone looking out for him while she is not there to care for him. I have no doubt, that Melanie Peele would go another mile to help him out if ever needed again in the future.

Without hesitation, I would consider her to be a shining example of "Ever Loyal Be" and truly believe she should be awarded this honor for her dedication to her students and all that accompanies them as well.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Debra Murphy Crump", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Debra Murphy Crump

Class of 1993





COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

17 April 2019

Dear Selection Committee:

I am pleased to have the opportunity to submit a recommendation letter on behalf of Mrs. Melanie Peel for the Student Outreach Award. Prior to 2014, I only knew of Melanie by her positive reputation on campus. When I became the Academic Director for the Mathematics and Statistics Program in Summer 2014, I began working with Melanie and others on the Bridge to Bulldogs (Bridge) Program for students who fail to meet Louisiana Tech's admission criteria. That is, Bridge students meet all University admission criteria with the exception of Math ACT. Without the Bridge program, these students would not even be allowed to attend Louisiana Tech!

Bridge went through a transformation in 2014-15 due to changes from the Louisiana Board of Regents. I can attest that from that time, Melanie and her team engaged me and necessary mathematics faculty as partners in the endeavor. The Bridge program has become a true academic-student affairs partnership. Melanie and her team have deferred to the expertise of the team regarding the mathematical content, and we have deferred to the student affairs staff to deliver the program according to best practices. Consequently, we have an excellent relationship of mutual respect between the divisions. Melanie has been a great help to me personally in working with other parts of campus to introduce new mathematics courses that we have also used in the Bridge program.

I am amazed by Melanie's passion for and commitment to the Bridge students. She meets with all Bridge students on a regularly scheduled basis. When students fail to make their appointments with her, she tracks them down like a concerned mom. In our regular meetings, we spend considerable time discussing the needs of the students and particular students who are not performing well in the mathematics course. Melanie follows up with these students to try to understand the situation, which requires, in some cases, very difficult conversations and sometimes tough love. I often think that I'm glad it's Melanie having those conversations and not me! She really has a special talent for interacting with these students and keeping them on track. She exudes care for them, both as Tech students and as human beings.

I have also been impressed that Melanie builds excellent relationships with Bridge students and their parents starting in the initial recruitment phase. Even in cases where students are not successful in Bridge, Melanie continues to interact with the students and their families to try to identify the best academic fit for the student, even if it is not at Louisiana Tech. Melanie is a real asset to Tech and the Bridge program.

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• MEMBER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA SYSTEM •

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AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER



I thank you for considering Melanie's nomination packet. She is an outstanding candidate for this award. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Katie A. Evans".

Katie A. Evans

Associate Dean of Strategic Initiatives

Academic Director, Mathematics & Statistics and Online Programs

Director, Integrated STEM Education Research Center (ISERC)

Entergy Corp LP&L/NOPSI #3 & #4 Professor of Mathematics