



LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

University Senate
Louisiana Tech University

Ashley Osborne
*Project-Based Learning Specialist
Admin Coord, INEN & ICET*

May 06, 2022

Dear University Senate,

Thank you for your consideration of my nomination for the Student Outreach Award (Unclassified). I am honored by this recognition. As part of this nomination, I submit the following description of my position, job responsibilities, and impact on the lives of our students.

My primary position is Project-Based Learning Specialist. The Engineering program here in the College of Engineering & Science is heavily project based – most of the classes in the first two years of an engineering student’s curriculum require at least one physical project that the students complete over the course of a quarter. For example, an engineering student in just their first year will build a programmable robot that uses a microcontroller, a water pump system, a temperature-controlled canister oven, a miniature linear actuator, an aluminum laser cut nameplate, and a student-designed original prototype of a workable product. Since beginning this position in July 2017, I have been one of the primary contacts for students to receive the parts and pieces that they require for these projects. If students need additional parts, assistance with lab access, information regarding our department’s services, picking up completed projects, borrowing more expensive sensors, requesting the use of our lab equipment or facilities, etc., I handle all of these requests. In an average day, I usually interact with over 100 students.

Another major part of my job is the distribution of project items and the sale of replacements. At the beginning of fall quarter I interact with every first-year engineering student when they come by my office window to pick up their tool bags and robot projects for the quarter – this is typically over 450 students in two days. Our office has also expanded operations to include providing kits and materials for several sophomore ENGR courses and for the entire Instrumentation & Control Systems Engineering Technology (ICET) program. During the first two class days of the fall quarter alone, I estimate I interact with more than 700 students. In total I oversee the distribution of kits and materials for twenty-four (24) different classes in an academic year, and I estimate I interact with over 1000 individual students during that time.

I offer support to students as well – both having to do with their academic projects and as unofficial counselor for students who have questions. There are always students who need some encouragement, advice, troubleshooting assistance, direction on where to go for something, or a listening ear for what they are going through. Over the years I have heard personal stories, offered compassionate counsel, and celebrated victories. I often see myself as a cheerleader for students – one of the best parts of my job is the last few weeks of spring quarter, where I get to see and hear the accomplishments of our students with whom I’ve worked and talked over the year. Just last night (May 5), our entire freshman group presented their prototype projects at our design exposition event, and I loved seeing the completion of their personal

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growth and skills building that began in September. “Hey, Mrs. Ashley, come see how it came together, it works now!” is one of my favorite things to hear. Even when things don’t work out as well and the students come to me for advice, I love being a sounding board for them and trying to help them feel heard, cared for, and significant.

I also oversee a team of over twenty (20) student workers as their direct supervisor. In an average quarter, I have five student workers with whom I work daily in the office and our prototyping lab; I am the supervisor for fifteen in-class student mentors and graders for all our freshman classes; and I manage the student worker staff for two different student helpdesk sessions each weekday for engineering students to get help with homework or extra time in the labs. Among other services, my office maintains the lab spaces for the first floor of the Integrated Engineering & Science Building, offers a walk-up service desk and two vending machines for students to procure the aforementioned project parts, and handles 3D printing and laser cutting projects out of the prototyping lab near our office. Often our prototyping lab also assists with student research projects and other departments across campus such as Architecture. Every day we have multiple tours of prospective students that pass by our office, and sometimes I am asked questions by these students or their parents about our program and what we do.

My other job responsibilities include administrative assistance to the Industrial Engineering and the ICET program, which often involves helping senior design students with their projects or unofficial counseling when they just need someone to listen. Every fall I look forward to teaching a section of FYE 100, as I feel strongly that this is one of the best avenues to help new students gain awareness of their resources here and the values of being connected on our campus. In the past I have adjunct-taught some survey History classes and I also enjoy that experience when it comes my way.

My position is entirely dependent upon personal interaction with students. I love my job and what I do, and the best part of it is being able to work hand-to-hand with students. To me, offering a positive and fun atmosphere while being as efficient and helpful as possible is my daily goal; I feel most fulfilled and satisfied when I know I have been an instrumental part of a student’s journey in our college. I am deeply thankful for a supportive administrative staff and a college that gives me the freedom and independence to fully occupy my role to the best of my abilities. I am passionate about helping our students in a potentially difficult and extremely rewarding season of their academic career, and I love cheerleading for them as they grow and develop into incredible students and engineers.

Thank you again for considering my nomination. I wish you all the best as you continue serving our University and our faculty.

Ever Loyal Be,

Ashley J.H. Osborne
Project-Based Learning Specialist
Administrative Coordinator, INEN & ICET Programs
College of Engineering & Science

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May 4, 2022

Dear University Senate:

I'm honored to write a letter supporting Ms. Ashley Osborne as she is considered for the Student Outreach Award. Ashley and I have worked together closely over the past five academic years to support the project-based learning efforts in the COES. We are housed in the Project-Based Learning Office on the first floor of the new Integrated Engineering and Science Building (IESB).

Ashley is the person responsible for packing the tool kits that you see engineering students holding as they walk across campus. In fact, if you see an engineering student carrying anything that has wires or that looks like something technical, Ashley probably gave it to them. She answers all sorts of questions and tries to help students figure out problems with their robots or design prototypes. Even when she doesn't know what's wrong, she'll dive right in to help with troubleshooting. When she first started her job, I would often interrupt these "help" sessions ... how could Ashley possibly know how to fix an Arduino microcontroller??? But, when students show up now, I just tell them to go talk to Ashley ... she has become an expert. The same situation is true for students who have problems installing SolidWorks or Mathcad (two of the main software programs used by engineering students).

Ashley also supervises over 20 students who staff the after-hours engineering HelpDesk in the IESB and who serve as mentors in first-year engineering courses. She has regular meetings with the student workers to set expectations in terms of assisting and mentoring students. She is positive but firm as she explains the professionalism, care, and kindness with which our workers are expected to interact with beginning students. She trains these students on effective outreach, thereby multiplying her efforts and impact.

Ashley routinely stays after hours to make sure critical activities are completed. Last Thursday (April 28) we had finished our annual Crawfish Boil and I was leaving the office around 7:30 PM. I thought that everybody was gone so I switched off the light, but when I was walking out, I noticed that Ashley was in our Prototyping Lab getting a new batch of 3D printed parts started so that our freshman students would have the parts needed on Friday morning and would be able to make progress on their "smart products" over the weekend. She routinely provides this level of support to students.

Ashley literally does the work of two people while cheerfully greeting students and faculty at our service counter (she also serves as an admin for the ICET and INEN academic programs where she assists a different cohort of students). Ashley has a positive impact on large numbers of students. She is smart, cheerful, accurate, adventurous, and kind as she interacts with students. She makes our end of the building a happy place to visit. She is a perfect candidate for this award, and it is my pleasure to recommend her for your consideration.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D. Hall", with a light blue circular highlight around it.

David Hall, Ph.D.

James F. Naylor, Jr. Associate Professor of Mechanical Engineering

Director of Project-Based Learning, Industrial Engineering, and Instrumentation & Control
Systems Engineering Technology



5/3/2022

Student Outreach Award Selection Committee:

It is my pleasure to recommend Ms. Ashley Osborne for the University Senate Student Outreach Award. She has loyally served as the Project-Based Learning Specialist in the Project-Based Learning (PBL) Office in the College of Engineering and Science (COES) since 2017. Throughout these years, I have worked closely with Ms. Osborne and rely heavily on the services she provides to the students. I can attest to her dedication, commitment, and service to students in the COES.

As the Project-Based Learning Specialist, it is expected the Ms. Osborne will interact with many students. However, she has gone above and beyond expectations and has molded her position into one of mentorship and service. She is constantly thinking of ways to improve the resources offered to the students through her office. She has played an integral role in transforming the office from a rarely used resource to a widely visited and necessary part of the COES students' academic lives. On a given day, Ms. Osborne interacts with 100-250 students. The students learn early on in their studies that she is the go-to person for assistance with course materials and resources.

She has designed and implemented procedures to help make the office more accessible to students and has increased efficiency of the office to serve more students consistently. Specifically, she manages all the project kits for multiple project-based classes which are essential components of each course. The faculty of these courses rely heavily on Ms. Osborne to provide these resources to the student which enable them to provide better and deeper content in their courses. Ms. Osborne plans out the kits, orders supplies, and leads a staff of student workers who organize and sort the kits for each class. Students will come to her office to purchase and retrieve the kits. During the academic year, Ms. Osborne will provide kits for over 1000 students. Through her exceptional ability to set processes and procedures, we have been able to impact more students and support more faculty through projects kits.

Ms. Osborne is constantly thinking of new ways to help improve the quality of education and resources for the students. One example comes to mind of when she wanted to prove better access to students who needed smaller engineering parts outside of office hours. Previously, we had an old broken-down vending machine that the students would fight with to get parts. She took it upon herself to apply for a Lagniappe Ladies grant requesting funds for a new vending machine that takes credit cards and works more reliably for the students. She was awarded the grant and has spearheaded the purchasing and stocking of the vending machines. This is a huge resource for the students that provides the students with after hours help.

Ms. Osborne is also very cognizant of the moral of students and thinks of fun ways to help encourage them. Students will often pass by her office each season and holiday to see the fun decorations she has placed outside of her office. She is always thinking about things to do to put a smile on students faces and make their day just a little better. Ms. Osborne interacts with hundreds of students each quarter and each of them, I can guarantee, knows her name is greeted by her friendly smile and welcoming laugh when

they come to her office. Additionally, Ms. Osborne manages a team of 20+ students whom she mentors as they learn about the PBL office and provide support for the faculty teaching classes. Ms. Osborne goes above a typical supervisor and plans extra events and treats for the student workers to encourage them and thank them for their hard work. Because of her approach to managing the students, she has a waitlist of students who apply to work under her.

When I reflect over the time Ms. Osborne has spent in the PBL office, the main word that comes to mind is **transformative**. She has helped transform the capabilities of the office through the services she provided to the students and faculty. She thinks outside of the box to provide more and more resources. She not only focuses on the technical side of her job but has a passion for students and has transformed the culture of her office into a place the students are welcomed, encouraged, and supported.

I strongly believe that Ms. Ashley Osborne is one of the most deserving nominees for the University Senate Student Outreach Award. She has a true passion for students and daily goes above and beyond her typically job duties to help them. Her many acts of service through the PBL office are far reaching. She has made major impacts on many students. I, without hesitation, enthusiastically support her nomination for the University Senate Student Outreach Award. If you should need any further information, I am happy to speak with you through email (kcorbett@latech.edu) or phone (318-257-2422).

Sincerely,



Krystal Corbett Cruse, PhD

First Engineering Programs Coordinator

Co-Director of the Office for Women in Science and Engineering

Lecturer, Mechanical Engineering

College of Engineering and Science

Louisiana Tech University

Dear Student Outreach Award Committee,

I am writing on behalf of one of your candidates, Mrs. Ashley Osborne. Ashley is a Project Based Learning Specialist with the College of Engineering and Science Living with the Lab group. I have know Ashley since I began my graduate studies in the Fall of 2019. As for a brief background on myself: I am a Louisiana Tech engineering graduate from 2004. I went on to work in industry for many years and eventually found myself back in the Ruston area. At that time I joined the Louisiana Tech engineering graduate program. In addition to working on my graduate degree, I became a graduate assistant working with Ashley in the Living with the Lab group.

When I began my graduate assistantship, Ashley was one of the first people I encountered. For me, this was a very daunting time; I was back in school after being away from academics for a decade and a half. Ashley was immediately welcoming and friendly, and she made this difficult time much easier to bear. After getting to work side-by-side with her for quite some time, I feel I have come to know Ashley very well: not only through the eyes of a co-worker but with the prospective of a student as well. With all of the projects that the Living with the Lab office is involved in through the freshman and sophomore engineering series, we see many students come through. What I can say, with absolute certainty, is that Ashley cares about the students' education, their needs, and most importantly their well-being. The freshman engineering year is a difficult time for many students, since for most of them this is their first time experiencing a university level program. And the engineering program is very demanding of the students. Ashley understands this very well, and makes sure she gives every student that approaches her office the time and attention they need to answer their questions, help solve their issues, and provide the hardware they need. And despite whatever else may be happening, she always greets the students with a smile and a kind word. As for myself, not only is she a co-worker and a friend, she has been a kind and fair confidant that I know I can always come to with any frustrations with my own education. I could go on and on talking about a plethora of examples from the past few years of Ashley's service to the students, but suffice to say that I have always been impressed, if not somewhat envious, of the depth of her dedication to the students. The Living with the Lab program would not be the same, nor could it even run, with out Ashley at her post.

Please give Ashley careful consideration for this award. As her friend and co-worker, I know from the bottom of my heart that she is more than deserving of this honor.

Sincerely,
Casey Kidd