



LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

April 29, 2024

Dear Awards Committee:

Thank you for your consideration of my nomination for the University Senate Student Outreach Award. I feel very honored to have been nominated for this award. My name is Natalie Osborne, and I am the Helpdesk Supervisor for the Information Technology Department. I have been working for Louisiana Tech for a little over eight years now. My husband retired from the United States Air Force, and we ended up here in Ruston, Louisiana. The most important goal for our family was to establish roots and find a long-term place we could call home for our family. We are a military family that has lived all over the world, and we were used to moving every two to three years. Ruston has exceeded our expectations and become a perfect place for all of us to call home. We have two boys, Brian, 19, a freshman here at Louisiana Tech, and Tyler, 14, currently in 8th grade at Ruston Junior High School. I was blessed to get a job here at the University after we first moved here and the relationships, I have built along the way have far exceeded any job description I could have ever applied for. Little did I know working with so many college-aged students would be this rewarding. The enthusiasm and bright aspirations that they bring are inspiring and contagious. It truly makes the job rewarding and worthwhile.

I am writing to provide insight into my role as the helpdesk supervisor at Louisiana Tech University and how we strive to enhance the quality of student life on campus through our services and initiatives.

As a helpdesk supervisor, my responsibilities encompass various tasks aimed at supporting students in their academic and technological endeavors. Here are four key aspects of my role:

1. **Technical Support:** One of our primary tasks is to provide technical assistance to students, faculty, and staff. This includes troubleshooting hardware and software issues, classroom support, assisting with account management for faculty, staff and students and newly admitted students, and addressing connectivity issues.
2. **Training and Development:** We are responsible for training and mentoring our team of student workers to ensure they have the necessary skills and knowledge to provide effective support to our campus community. Our student workers have had to learn Duo/MFA and Office 365 to support campus initiatives.
3. **Continuous Improvement:** We continuously assess and improve our services to meet the evolving needs of students and faculty. For example, we recognized the

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importance of reliable Wi-Fi connectivity for student life and spearheaded initiatives to eliminate routers and enhance Wi-Fi coverage across the campus.

4. ****Innovative Solutions:**** In addition to standard responsibilities, we strive to go above and beyond by implementing innovative solutions to enhance the student experience. One such initiative is the introduction of a chat feature on the helpdesk website, allowing students to easily contact the helpdesk, especially with the implementation of Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA)/Duo, streamlining account reset processes.

Our efforts at the University helpdesk extend beyond technical support. We aim to create a welcoming environment for all majors where students not only receive assistance but also develop valuable skills and relationships. With a team of 35 student workers, we foster a sense of community and encourage lifelong learning. Students are empowered to explore their interests and passions, whether in cybersecurity, networking, or human resources, contributing to both their personal growth and the improvement of our services.

Building strong connections with students is at the heart of what we do. I am proud to share a story that exemplifies the impact of our efforts. A high school student once job shadowed at the helpdesk and later chose to attend our university. He joined the helpdesk team during his time at the University, and over the years, we developed a close bond. Even after his graduation, we continue to stay in touch, highlighting the lasting impact of the relationships we cultivate. The very core that Tech is known for is felt at the helpdesk, the Tech family.

In conclusion, I am deeply committed to meeting the needs of students, faculty, and staff at Louisiana Tech University. Through innovative solutions, continuous improvement, and a welcoming environment, we strive to enhance the overall quality of student life on campus.

Thank you for considering my perspective on the invaluable work we do at the University helpdesk.

Sincerely,



Natalie K. Osborne
Helpdesk Supervisor
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Chief Information Officer
Information Technology

April 30, 2024

Dear Awards Committee,

I am excited to support Natalie Osborne's nomination for the University Senate Student Outreach Award. I am pleased that she has been recognized for this prestigious university award. Natalie has been devoted to providing student support at the university by managing the IT university help desk. Despite being the only full-time employee at the Help Desk, she manages a group of 20-40 student workers at any given time. This IT Help Desk supports not only the university's 11,550 students but also all 1,200 staff and faculty members. She dedicates her heart and soul to everything that she does and always proactively works towards improving the way IT offers support.

Natalie's performance this year has been exceptional, particularly her role in the rollout of the university's new Student Information System (SIS), Workday Student. While many of the IT team members have been working on this project for the past several years, Natalie has played a leading role in the student support part. Students need to set up multi-factor authentication to access WorkDay Student, and Natalie has led the effort in achieving this. Her proactive coordination with the colleges and the library to set up student support stations around the campus has been remarkable. She had support tables set up at all the colleges, in the student center, and in the library. As of April 30, 2024, we have 7,345 people registered to use DUO (Louisiana Tech University's multi-factor authenticator). No student will be able to register for Fall 2024 without having DUO set up, and much of this can be attributed to Natalie's assistance. She managed to do all of this while still providing normal operations support for the IT Help Desk. This is just one of the many ways that Natalie is deserving of the University Senate Student Outreach Award.

I cannot think of anyone more deserving of this award than Natalie. I am happy to answer any questions or provide any assistance to support her nomination for this award.

Best,

Dr. Thomas Hoover



OFFICE OF THE DEAN OF INCLUSION
INITIATIVES & STUDENT SUCCESS

April, 28, 2024

It is with great pleasure that I am afforded the opportunity to recommend Natalie K. Osborne for the 2023-2024 Student Outreach Award. One would be hard-pressed to find a person on the Louisiana Tech campus who has touched the lives of so many students and continues to do so. Natalie supervises 35 student workers at the Louisiana Tech Help Desk. Never have I seen students so eager to work for someone as I have seen with Natalie.

I am a staff member and I have had several occasions to visit the Help Desk. Each time I leave there, I am totally impressed with the level of concern for my issues as well as the opportunity to resolve them. Most of the time, Natalie is the first person that comes to my rescue before the students even get involved. Her passion for her job is reflected through the students that she supervises.

It is almost unfair to have Respect and Leadership as a requirement for this award. Natalie embodies all the tenets on a day-to-day basis and that is one of the things that makes her so special. I have seen in Natalie a commitment to each student to making sure needs are met and if she can't do it, she will find someone who can.

Louisiana Tech has a hidden gem in the basement of Wylie Tower and everyone who encounters Natalie Osbourne becomes a better person. If this award recognizes an employee who has taken strides in improving the lives of students, then your search is over!

I recommend her without hesitation and would welcome an opportunity to give more detailed information if necessary. Thank you for your consideration and for allowing me to write this recommendation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jimmy Washington', is written over a white rectangular box.

Jimmy Washington (he/him)
Assistant Director of External Relations

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Dear Service Award committee:

Natalie Osborne carries my strongest recommendation for the Service Award. I have been a faculty member at Louisiana Tech for over 45 years and think Natalie Osborne is a perfect choice and most deserving of the Service Award. I have known Natalie for her time as a supervisor of the help desk and have found her to consistently epitomize the characteristics listed for the award along with additional characteristics of a gracious attitude, terrific problem-solving ability, exceptional competence and dedication. Natalie uses her personal strengths and talents to make the university a better place for all of us to work, fulfill our obligations and develop as faculty, staff and students. Students and faculty are less frustrated and far happier at Louisiana Tech because of Natalie's help.

In my personal experience, Natalie has helped me transfer a large quantity of material from one computer to another when no one in the college or student help desk workers could do that. She gave me a cell number so that when *Respondus* lock down browser failed or kicked a student out for technical reasons. I could text her at any time, even beyond usual hours, and she always cheerfully rescues the panicked, distraught student. She patiently teaches me, and I have watched her teach other faculty how to perform tasks in technology or solve issues. I am impressed that she never belittles a faculty member or student who has a problem, treating all with respect, just as she treats all her student help desk workers (most are not computer science majors). Natalie serves as a conduit to computer center staff that have more specialized positions when the issue is a more central computer system down or

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malfunction. These can be quite serious. One event I recall is on a Sunday night when Natalie was notified by a phone call at home, she contacted Danny Schales and together they worked almost all night to resolve a system issue that would have prevented the students from being able to register the next morning. We all woke up the next morning to smooth registration technology. That would not have occurred without Natalie's swift action and responding to a call for help on a Sunday night. Often it is not obvious to us the pain we are all saved due to Natalie's work behind the scenes.

Frequently, folks who solve computer issues derived from problems the helper did not create, people associate the helper more with initial frustration than with the solution afforded by the helper. I invite you to vote for someone who is part of the solution and who no matter how frustrated or irritable the person needing help maybe when they call; Natalie always politely, cheerfully and expertly responds to the person who has a problem. I have tried to relate some of the many services she performs to the awards criteria though. Many apply in more than one category and still represent but a small subset of Natalie's many service contributions. Below is a sample of ways she meets the criteria.

- **Full time unclassified employee who has been employed within the university for 8+ years.**

Natalie has served as the help desk supervisor since 2016. During that time she has helped numerous students with computer difficulties and faculty who have had problems. Initially, until LA Tech hired Whitney Sivils Sawyer, Natalie stood in the

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breech and in addition to her many other duties also managed Moodle and the software that Whitney took over. Natalie basically was doing two jobs.

Her work since 2016 solving Multifactor and Duo Authentication problems has helped 1,000s of faculty and students gain access to critical resources (e.g. email, courses, online work materials) Duo Authentication is but a minor part of her job. So that represents only a small percentage of what she does. I'll offer this number to make clear that her reach ranges far and deep in her assistance to faculty, staff and students. As you will see below, she serves in many capacities often staying past the end of the day and answering her cell after hours to distraught faculty and aiding desperate students even at night and on the weekends.

- **Collaborates with other departments on campus.**

Natalie's cooperative positive attitude, have enabled her to work with others across colleges, maximizing Tech's use of what has often been limited funding for technology. Her position as the computing center helpdesk supervisor, means she and her helpdesk trainees are the main connection to students and faculty from across campus. Students of all colleges call or come to the computer center when problems or questions arise. Panicked students from any college or discipline whose computer breaks during exams are helped by Natalie to contact the library and access the library loaner computers .

There are grants that have been submitted on time for funding because of Natalie's help with cantankerous funding websites.; students who would not have passed



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classes or been able to attend zoom meetings and faculty who could not have done their jobs without Natalie's help.

As help desk supervisor, Natalie trains and supervises 35 students a quarter from all across the university. To work at the help desk you do not have to be a computer science major. Under her watchful eye, and with benefit of her ability to provide training and additional information, these students from all across campus operate a call center triaging phone calls and chat sessions for trouble shooting computer issues in person, by phone or remotely. She has trained the students to solve basic common issues, but it is Natalie who takes care of the rest. Whatever their major the help desk workers gain valuable real-world experience that has added to their resumes along with their degrees. Customer service and computer skills are needed in most all majors and jobs. It should be noted with student graduations and other turnovers, she impacts the lives of many help desk student workers each year.

Many don't know that the top priority of the help desk is classroom technology. Natalie and her help desk student workers help with setting up classroom podium computers, fixing classroom projectors. Their help extends beyond academics. Last summer Natalie's student workers assisted network administrators with the campus network up-grade project. They installed equipment that was a major improvement in the housing buildings eliminating the need for routers in many buildings. The upgrade gave a better first impression to new and current students living in campus housing.

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At the helpdesk, the student workers Natalie trains and supervises, assist other students with setting up passwords getting into email, logging into g-suite, office 365, installing software, and accessing campus applications. Additionally the helpdesk has been the primary resource for the new workday student in setting up Multi Factor Authentication. As mentioned earlier, they have helped thousands of students in sitting up their DUO Authentication and assisting with re-sets.

- **Goes above and beyond standard responsibilities to deliver quality service to faculty, and Commitment to meeting the needs of students, faculty, and staff**

Natalie consistently goes above and beyond. She truly deserves this award. Natalie has responded to panicked students and faculty in the evening. One of my students panicked thinking her test responses had been lost due to a power outage. Natalie cheerfully rallied and by going into the *Respondus* software found a way to remotely submit the student's test. This is just one example. I could list many other rescues. I have no doubt that she personally has helped retain students frustrated by technological problems beyond the student's and the Help Desk's control. Without Natalie and her well trained team's service, some students would give up or drop out unable to access needed technology. Natalie has provided individual guidance and advice to faculty in overcoming the inevitable problems that occur when applying new technology. Her response is always cheerful, patient and encouraging. She is never condescending to those of us who lack her expertise. Without criticism or complaint, she models how one can solve the problem in the future, mentoring and framing the situation as a mutual endeavor.

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As you are aware, the state of Louisiana has a digital divide. Some students do not have computers for online classwork or have chrome book computers not compatible with the *Respondus* exam proctoring software the University adopted. Often students do not have the academic navigational capital to know where to go for help. They take the term “help desk” very literally and generally. Natalie and the help desk is a first stop for students lost in the University system. Beyond technology, she and the workers she trains also help students to get to the university resource or department when the problem is not technology. Natalie and the help desk go beyond computer problem to help students navigate the university.

Natalie creates time for everyone and treats your problem as if it were her own with attention and urgency. She is there when you need her, whoever you are. She is as responsive to students and faculty as she is to upper-level administrators. Natalie consistently places the service needs of others above her own personal time and convenience. She often continues to work from home and solves problems remotely and if needed on campus. She has gone beyond the job description, used and developed her talents to make Tech a better place and to serve members of the University.

- **Shows excellence in service and loyalty to the university and Exudes Louisiana Tech pride**

Natalie often quietly works behind the scenes and doesn't seek the limelight. As a result of her modesty, Natalie's many contributions have not been as recognized as

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they should have been. Excellence and loyal service are her brand. She is a loyal Tech supporter and has a son who is a freshman at LA Tech and another son at the local junior high. She is a valuable, committed member of the Tech family and serves the Tech community.

Please give Natalie you full consideration. She is well deserving of the award.

Sincerely,

Mary Margaret Livingston

Mary M. Livingston, PhD
Professor
Undergraduate Psychology Coordinator
Director of Human Services Concentration, Masters of Counseling
Melvin McCann Endowed Professorship
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