



LOUISIANA TECH UNIVERSITY

DIVISION OF STUDENT AFFAIRS
DEPARTMENT OF STUDENT DEVELOPMENT
AND ACADEMIC ENHANCEMENT

To the University Senate,

First off, thank you. It does not go unnoticed or unappreciated that you provide opportunities such as the University Senate Awards to recognize the amazing work going on around campus by some incredible individuals. I am beyond humbled to have been nominated for the Student Outreach Award and honored to be among the finalists in consideration.

When I was still a student at Louisiana Tech, I remember the anxiety, doubts, and fears that came with each phase of college life. From adapting to the transition from high school to college, to struggles with balancing academics and social life, to being unsure about what the future held after graduation, I often felt that I was in over my head and destined to fail. However, at each step along the way, I was blessed to have meaningful relationships with many faculty, staff, and administrators that poured intentional support into me and shaped not only my collegiate journey, but my professional one as well. Without the mentors that walked me through those pivotal years, I never would have felt the transformative work that occurs on a college campus and would not be working towards my tenth year as an employee at Louisiana Tech.

Over those past ten years, I have been lucky to serve this university and our students in a variety of ways. Those first years as an Admissions Recruiter and Director of Orientation grew my knowledge of Tech and its many resources while also deepening my passion for serving students. In that time, I not only gained the tools to succeed in the position in which I currently serve, as the Director of First Year Programs, but those roles allowed me to showcase the university across the campus, state, and beyond while recruiting potential Bulldogs.

Today, my focus has shifted, but my intent remains the same. My days are spent preparing for the arrival of the newest batch of Bulldogs while cultivating meaningful relationships with current students from all parts of campus. Working with students—from their first-year days at orientation and in FYE 100, to their growth into guides and leaders as Blue Fire Mentors and Orientation Student Leaders—allows me to be a part of their lives through graduation and beyond.

When I am asked what I do for my career, it is often difficult to put into words what a Director of First-Year Programs does and why it is important. But as I write this letter at 8:00 pm, I just received a call from a student asking how to get an enrollment verification form filled out, so they can get a good student discount on their car insurance. How do you explain to someone outside of the university setting, that small moments of support and guidance like that, often define our roles on campus?

Most days, I arrive to Wylly Tower by 6:45 a.m. so I can spend a quiet hour getting a head start on knocking out the tedious tasks of the day. This is the small price I pay so that when a student (or ten) stops by in need of last minute academic advising, a recommendation letter for a new job or grad school, assistance with airing up a deflated tire, or to ask “do you want to go to BCM lunch with us?” I

A MEMBER OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA SYSTEM

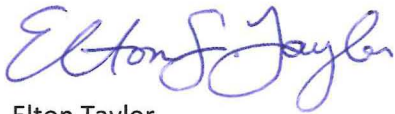
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have the time to do so. There is no such thing as a “9 to 5” job in higher ed as planning movie or game nights for team bonding, judging for a Greek Life or Union Board event, or answering countless phone calls and texts regularly happen long before and after your standard work day. But that is of no consequence, because being a part of these student’s lives is my purpose and to support them in these impactful years brings me so much joy.

No job description could ever adequately put into words, the small but monumental interactions I encounter every day when working with students. They are at the same time the funniest, most heartfelt, genuinely authentic, and absolutely frustrating people. And I love each and every one that trusts me to guide and support them. Our jobs aren’t always easy, but I go to bed each day with a profound sense of fulfillment knowing that I get to wake up again and be a part of so many lives, but more importantly, that they are a part of mine. Thank you again for the opportunity to share a little of what I do at this fine institution. Participating in this process is an absolute honor, and I wish the Senate the best of luck in making their determinations.

Cheers,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elton Taylor". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Elton Taylor
Director of First-Year Programs



LOUISIANA TECH
UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF THE DEAN

Dean of Student Services and Academic Support

May 3, 2024

Selection Committee,

I take great pleasure in the opportunity to recommend Mr. Elton Taylor for the Louisiana Student Outreach Award. Mr. Taylor's **strong work ethic**, which is evident to all who know him, as well as his passion for student outreach, makes him a great choice for this award.

I have had the pleasure of observing Mr. Taylor in his role as Director of First-Year Programs. I often observe Mr. Taylor going above and beyond to assist students in their academic and professional pursuits. His ability to make students feel comfortable, meet them where they are, and **guide them through their academic journey is impressive**. Mr. Taylor's **compassion for student success**, and attention to creating a positive campus culture are to be commended. I have personally witnessed his passion for student success and integration to campus life shine, through his leadership with professional roles but also with his attention to addressing barriers in areas with which he has oversight. Mr. Taylor's **concern for student wellbeing is admirable**, as well as essential for an impactful career in higher education.

Mr. Taylor also makes every effort to reach outside his work obligations to forge new relationships that will ultimately benefit the students he serves. He serves not only the Ruston and DownTown communities, but also in roles such as a Student Resource Team member in the pandemic.

It is without question; Mr. Taylor is deserving of this award. Mr. Taylor is most certainly a wonderful representative of our University. Again, it is a great honor to recommend Mr. Elton Taylor for this award and I recommend him without reservation. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can further assist this process (stacyc@latech.edu/318.257.2445).

Sincerely,

Stacy C. Gilbert
Dean of Student Services and Academic Support



LOUISIANA TECH
UNIVERSITY.

INCLUSION INITIATIVES & STUDENT SUCCESS
BULLDOG CULTURAL CENTER

May 2, 2024

RE: Letter of Support for Elton Taylor

Dear University Senate,

I am writing this letter in support of Elton Taylor for the Student Outreach Award through the University Senate. Elton has embodied servant leadership in his daily interactions with our students. While his primary reach seems to be Orientation Leaders, I can attest that it is far greater than that. He has been and remains an influence on students whom he advises, has in FYE 100, and meets through the retention processes.

I fully support Elton receiving the Student Outreach Award and believe that he is a deserving candidate.

If you have questions, don't hesitate to contact me directly via phone at 318.257.2532 or email at dlvaughn@latech.edu.

Sincerely,

Dean Devonia Love-Vaughn, MSW

5/3/2024

Student Outreach Award Committee:

As a member of the executive council of orientation, I have the privilege of working in Elton Taylor's office. I believe it is important to note that when I say, "working in Elton's office," I genuinely mean that all four of us executive council members literally sit *in* Elton's office around his desk, usually accompanied by three or four other Orientation Student Leaders or Blue Fire Mentors. There in the Bulldog Achievement Resource Center, I see day in and day out how that office transforms to a tutoring center, music studio, counseling practice, and countless students' safe spaces. While Elton is undoubtedly a professional I look up to because he truly completes every task with paramount professionalism and customer service, what I admire most about Elton is how he takes that same amount of care and energy to walk 1,984 extra miles every week when it comes to caring for his students. Despite the countless questions we ask him or the ways our loaded teas and cafeteria to-go boxes clutter his desk, he welcomes us and makes all of us feel like the best thing to happen to his day.

In what seems like millions of students' stories, Elton is a Jiminy Cricket of sorts. Shown in the vast number of wedding invitations, groomsmen experiences, and officiant requests he receives each year, when a student has the privilege of working with Elton and being led by him, he quickly becomes both a role model and dear friend. In a stage of life where young adults learn self-leadership, integrity, and perseverance, Elton's support and loyalty is a comfort we can all count on. He is present at any event we plan, award ceremony we are recognized in, and in his office when we need a sounding board (or peanut butter crackers).

As I write this letter of recommendation, I am reminded of an iconic scene in "The Mighty Ducks" and every First Night of Orientation Student Leadership. In this scene, a coach of a youth hockey team leads his team in declaring their names and hometowns. At the end of everyone's turn, he reminds the students that even though their backgrounds are all different, they are ducks and ducks fly together. On the first night of Orientation Student Leadership, we recreate this scene. Now, every time I watch how these students share their identity so confidently, I cannot help but think of how Elton, in his leadership and unreasonable service to others allows students to discover and value who they are becoming and where they have been. I know that wherever I go after I walk across the stage at graduation, when I think of Louisiana Tech, servant-leadership, and unwavering support, I will also think of Elton Taylor.

Ever Loyal Be,
Sophie Edwards