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An interview with faculty sponsor Meredith Harrigan

Meredith Harrigan
SUNY Geneseo

Nicole Callahan
SUNY Geneseo

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An interview with faculty sponsor Meredith Harrigan

Nicole Callahan

What does undergraduate research mean to you?

It's a fabulous way for students to put into practice all the technical, scholarly materials they've been learning about in class, so, because of that, it's a way for people to really see what scholarship can do for us.

What impact do you think undergraduate research has on Geneseo culture and on higher education?

I think it plays a key role in our culture. It is really what we want to do. We want to provide transformational experiences, transformational learning opportunities for students, and through our active research process, that we see first hand on GREAT Day, in particular, we give students those opportunities. And if I can expand that, I'll say that not only do we give students the opportunities, we give transformational teaching opportunities for faculty. For example, the projects I mentor give me the chance to learn about new projects, and think about my mentorship skill and improve that process. So, it's really, I think, a very vibrant part of our college culture and an important part—not only for students but also for faculty.

What characteristics of the research the research that your student nominee did made you think it would be successful and what made you recommend it to us?

The key point was that it was connected to her experiences. Anni Ming was passionate about this topic when she came in as a new student, and she maintained that passion throughout her time here at Geneseo. So when she finally got the time to pursue the topic in her research project she was connected to it more so than we often see people be connected to their work. So right there we knew it was going to be good. It's one that we can learn so much from because it's all a topic that I would argue is underexplored in the literature on interpersonal and family communication, which is where her project centered. It was her deep connection that she had to it that really made her project stand out, her enthusiasm made it stand out, her passion made it stand out.

What role do you think you provided in the research process?

I came in with the scholarly background because her topic was a topic I studied for my doctoral dissertation. So I came in having the theoretical, having the technical

background. She came in with the personal experience, and so in terms of mentorship, I could help her make sense of her personal experience and those she was studying, from the more theoretical and scholarly perspective. So that was the way that I shaped the research project.

This is a fabulous project because it was so tied to her. I think having the opportunity to present her work in such a context was special because she wasn't just talking about some research project that was disconnected from her, she had an opportunity to share a part of her life to everybody who listened. That is transformational.