Mentoring Narrative
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In order to be a mentor, I believe you pull from the experiences you have with your own mentors throughout your life. I had a very inspirational grandmother who mentored me to young adulthood and then several strong and influential mentors who followed my grandmother both in my personal and professional endeavors. These mentors have supported me through some challenges and have been there to celebrate my accomplishments. I had the fabulous opportunity to write about two mentors in my professional life in an article for a national newsletter entitled, *Letters to my mentors*.¹

As I began my academic career at James Madison University in the undergraduate social work program, I was so focused on learning how to be an academic, I was unaware that I was mentoring until years later, when I heard the appreciation and gratitude from students such as Kara Nazor. In 1998, I left academia for about 5 years to work as the director of the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE) and a program coordinator for the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE). In 2000, Kara and I did a national presentation together and it was during that time, when Kara stated that she saw me as her mentor! No matter how often I hear that from a student, I feel very proud and I always let the students know what I have learned from them as well. While I worked at AGHE and CSWE, I took the time to understand the importance of sharing my experiences and challenges with student interns (sharing experiences that students can relate to can be an important part of the mentoring process). Balancing an internship with coursework and personal obligations (often times a paying job as well) can feel impossible for students at times; knowing that someone has made it through and is doing something similar to what the student is inspiring to can be empowering.

I have been in the GMU Social Work Department for 9 years and have consistently worked to foster an environment of student scholarship. I have been fortunate to always have an office where at least two people can work (sometimes it has been a tight squeeze)! If a student is working with me on an independent study or as a research assistant, they most often are in the office with me, not only working directly on the project but observing what else is occurring within the academic environment. If they are not in my office with me, they are out in the community with me collecting data. In 2006, I worked with the undergraduate social work faculty so that we could allow students who were working on an experiential project through the independent study process for 3 credits, to count it as one of their required social work elective courses; this way a student is fulfilling a requirement as well as increasing his or her scholarship. I have worked with Teri Zawacki and her staff to foster an environment of strong student writing over the years. We are working to be one of Teri’s first WIN(ning) Programs: [http://wac.gmu.edu/program/initiatives/winning.php](http://wac.gmu.edu/program/initiatives/winning.php). It has been a privilege to work with the QEP and Students as Scholars programs as a way to continue my passion to advocate for as many diverse, experiential learning opportunities for undergraduate students as possible.