



**COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS AND SCIENCE**  
**Department of Biological Sciences**

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Dear Award Committee Members,

I am proud to nominate the Biological Sciences advising team, comprised of Kimberly Hunter (AA IV, at6738), Rebecca Russell (AA III, eg4079), Antoinette Cunningham (AA III, fv0926) and Nora Alhussainy (AA II, cj2925) for the Outstanding Academic Advising Team Award. Our team advises approximately 1,500 Biological Science majors. Their goal is to ensure that every one of our students gets the most out of their time at Wayne State University – a mammoth undertaking! Our advisors use all modes of outreach, including mail, group advising sessions, e-mail and social media, to interact with as many students as possible. For example, they reach out to incoming students even before arrival on campus. Declared Biological Sciences students receive a welcome letter with a profile of the average student that graduates in 6 years. This enables the student to evaluate their preparation and gauge the work load that will be necessary. Of course, the well prepared and motivated students are easy. What is more difficult, and where our team shines, is in advising students that are in over their heads. Providing these students with the guidance that they need to achieve their dreams, or to move into a program that they can excel in, is essential. The success of our advising team, and Wayne State University, is not measured solely by the Biological Sciences graduates we produce, but by the graduation of students that change majors. Our advisors work to ensure that all of our students get the most out of their time at Wayne State, whether they graduate with a degree in Biology or in a different major. But one of the most important aspects of advising, emphasized in the student letters of support, is the effort that our advisors make to build confidence and enthusiasm in the students that they counsel.

Our advising team has played a central role course and program development. For example, working with faculty during the development of minors and the new Neuroscience program, where they are taking the lead in advising. Our advisors routinely consult with faculty on course design and prerequisite structure, finding opportunities and problems that would be otherwise missed. And they are engaged in outreach to address the unique challenges faced by transfer students. Community college advisors are devoted to the success of their students but rarely receive feedback on student performance after their transfer to Wayne State. Our advisors have traveled to local community colleges to meet with advisors there with the goal of developing

strategies to prepare transfer students for a successful transition to our university. As over 40% of our graduates are transfer students, this has the potential to influence overall student graduation rate.

In addition to these activities, the individuals that make up our advising team have all sought additional opportunities to interact with and guide students, and to improve the Wayne State experience. Kimberly Hunter serves as a coordinator for learning communities in Biological Sciences and is coordinating a professional development class for students conducting research. This fall Rebecca Russell will be teaching a First Year Seminar course that is designed to help incoming students build the academic skills that they will need to succeed. Antoinette Cunningham interviews Orientation Leaders and is the advisor of record for the WSU Black and Latinx Biology Student Association. Nora Alhussainy has worked on the International Student Welcome Orientation and is now hosting exchange students in the Iraqi Young Leaders Exchange Program.

All members of our advising team serve on multiple departmental, college and university committees and panels. They are a fixture in the volunteer pool at graduation, where they celebrate the successes of our students. I believe that Biological Sciences Advising Team exemplifies the dedication and teamwork necessary for student success, and I urge you to honor them with this well-deserved award.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "V. Meller" with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Victoria Meller, PhD.  
Professor and Chair of Biological Science

Dear Professor Meller,

I have made appointments with several advisors in the Biological Sciences department and I can definitively say that they are among the best advisors at Wayne State. I make appointments at least a few times a semester and they are always available to help with any questions I have or point me in the right direction to solve problems. Anything from class scheduling to future endeavor opportunity discussions, these advisors are always ready to help me succeed. For example, when I first transferred to Wayne State two years ago (and knew little about how my current education would fit with my future at Wayne) I made an appointment with Rebecca Russell. She made me feel that I would be accepted on campus and my goals and achievements were attainable here at Wayne. Additionally, I have made many appointments with Nora Alhuissany and I always walk out of the office feeling determined, confident, and excited about the work I am now better prepared to begin. All of the advisors in the Biological Sciences department are extremely helpful. I greatly appreciate the work that they do and they are deserving of acknowledgement from the University.

Sincerely,

Erika Pittman

To Dr. Meller,

As a student it can often become difficult to balance ones personal and academic goals, and it is important to know when to be able to reach out and work with others. Fortunately, at Wayne State University, there is a great team of individuals in the Biological Science advisors who are always ready to lend their support and expertise in order to ensure that every student is able to reach their maximum potential.

When I started at Wayne State I found the transition from High School to be difficult, and ensuring that I was on the right path was a priority. Tasks such as knowing what classes to pick, or what resources I had available was a challenge. Luckily the advisors were not only able to help out with my questions, but they were able to make sure that I had a solid foundation for starting my time in college.

Although all of the advisors have been great, I specifically remember how in one of my first meetings with Nora she not only helped plan my first classes but the remaining three years as well, going over in detail what I had set out for me; which showed me how much she really cared about my success. Although we continued to work on my schedule throughout my time in college, that first meeting with Nora allowed me to grasp just how important organization and teamwork was going to be in college. Her dedication allowed me to feel like I always had someone who I could rely on, and this enabled me to feel confident in the classes I was taking and become successful not only in, but outside the classroom as well. Moreover, when I was attempting to figure out how to forego my foreign language requirement through my second language, Rebecca and Nora both made a great effort to figure out how this could be accomplished, and it is was thanks to their efforts that I was able to figure it out. They made multiple calls, and sent out multiple emails in order to help, and it allowed me to see first hand just how invested they were in their students.

All of the advisors are not only great professionals, but great people too. I have had the pleasure to get to know them well, and I feel fortunate to have people around me who are very knowledgeable, and easy to talk to.

Sincerely,  
Gokturk

To whom it may concern,

I am a student getting a B.S. in Biological Sciences and I would like to express my support for the advising team in Biological Sciences. I have had the pleasure of working with them since I came in as a college freshman, and I am very grateful for their extensive support. Especially from Kimberly Hunter, who has not only helped me make multiple academic plans, but also helped me through other factors outside of school. Kim has always made herself available to me, and has gone above and beyond her role as an advisor to support me during my time here at Wayne State. In my first year, she not only helped me plan out my classes, but also made sure that I was getting involved on campus. As I challenged myself academically, she always supported me and suggested opportunities such as AGRADE. Kim was the most helpful to me during Winter 2019, where I had a lot of housing issues on campus and my anxiety as a result was affecting my academic performance. Kim did everything in her power to ensure that I felt safe on campus and even suggested services on campus that I could reach out to. I am very blessed to have such an amazing advising team that supports me through it all.

Thank you,  
Tabassum Chowdhury