**Wendy Casper PhD Student Mentoring Philosophy**

“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” — Nelson Mandela

One becomes a mentor when one answers the truly noble calling to teach. Of the many aspects of my academic identity, none resonate as deep with purpose and meaning as the work of teaching and mentoring PhD students. We leave our imprint not only on our own PhD students when we instruct them, but as we guide them into becoming the faculty of tomorrow they continue to inspire and develop future generations long after our own time in the academy passes. Great mentoring requires dedication, time, effort, selflessness, and the flexibility to adapt one’s leadership style to meet needs of different students. Good mentors watch out for mentees’ best interests - helping their careers flourish and ensuring they are happy and satisfied with the path they are on. This means not only coaching and guiding students on how to do research for top-tier journals but supporting them to make career and life choices that are best for them. As a mentor to PhD students my job is to teach them how to conduct good research and publish it, educate them about what it takes to be a successful academic, provide opportunities for them to form relationships and build their network in our professional community, provide social support to help them cope with the stressors that invariably come during their time as a doctoral student, and guide them through completing their dissertation, finding a job they desire, and launching a satisfying career. In my years at UTA I have contributed to PhD student education in three ways. First as a chair, co-chair and member of dissertation committees. Second, through relationships I developed with PhD students while teaching two PhD methods classes in the College of Business. Third, by taking on administrative positions in support of PhD programs in the College of Business.

During my years at UTA, I have chaired or co-chaired 7 dissertations for UTA PhD students and served as a committee member on 29 PhD dissertations. I have been fortunate to chair the dissertations of wonderful people with a sincere desire to make a difference. I am proud to say that my students have paid forward my investment in them many times over. The first dissertation committee I chaired at UTA was for Tae Yang, a student I personally recruited to UTA. From when I first came to UTA in 2004 I served on the PhD committee in the management department to help with admissions and recruiting. I first met Tae when I was a faculty member at the University of Tulsa (TU). Although I was not Tae’s advisor at TU I knew from my class that Tae was bright, hard-working, committed to research and a delightful person. When I learned from one of my former advisees at TU that Tae was facing a transition with his advisor leaving the university I saw a chance to recruit a terrific student and was delighted when Tae accepted our offer to become a PhD student at UTA. Tae and I then began collaborating on research and continue to do so today. We have presented numerous conference papers together and have published together in the most elite journal in our field - the *Journal of Applied Psychology*. Tae is now a tenured Associate Professor at Western Illinois University. I was thrilled to have the pleasure of meeting one of his students at a conference and was not surprised to hear what a great mentor Tae is to her.

I always consider each PhD student’s unique desires and career objectives when I mentor them. When I chair student dissertations I encourage students to choose topics they are passionate about rather than requiring them to work in my research area. This often requires me to read a new literature to provide the best guidance to my students. While most of my research centers around the topic of work-life balance, my students have written dissertations on a variety of topics in organizational behavior and human resource management. Tae Yang wrote a dissertation on impression management. Since this was a topic I knew little about I invited a professional colleague with expertise on this topic from the University of Alabama to serve on the committee. My other students have written PhD dissertations on topics as varied as generational difference (Katherine Roberto, now Assistant Professor at TAMU-Corpus Christi), ethical leadership (Dennis Marquardt, now Assistant Professor at Abilene Christian University), and social class (Demetria Henderson, now a Visiting Assistant Professor at James Madison University). Most recently, several of my students have written dissertations on topics closely related to work-life balance (Hoda Vaziri, now an Assistant Professor at University of North Texas, Faezeh Amirkamali, now an Assistant Professor at Marist College, and current PhD student Sheila Hyde). I am still in touch with all the PhD students whose dissertations I chaired and many other former PhD students whose committees I served on. I see myself as a senior colleague, friend, and supporter of these PhD students for the long-haul. I encourage students to continue to consult me for advice and guidance as they begin faculty jobs and need a sounding board to talk about the challenges they face as junior faculty.

In addition to dissertation service, many PhD students come through my classes and I consider myself a mentor to them as well. I have an open-door policy and PhD students regularly visit my office to ask questions about course material, get assistance with their dissertation or other research projects, and/or ask about professional issues or career decisions they face. During my time at UTA I have developed and taught two PhD courses in research methods, *Experimental Design* and *Multivariate Statistics*. In class, as on my dissertation committees, my goal is to push students to do their best work in a way that is supportive and nurturing. One student told me that among PhD students who have gone through my classes or had me on their dissertation committee I have a reputation for being very tough, but very kind. I hold students to high standards and expect a lot. But I do so with students’ best interests at heart. I encourage students to pursue excellence and make an important contribution in whatever path they choose – whether that is a research institution like I have chosen or a job at a more teaching focused university that many of our PhD graduates aspire to.

I have a broad professional network with colleagues around the globe and I love introducing my students to people in my network and helping them build their own network. To help PhD students network with scholars whose interests align with their own I ask colleagues with relevant expertise to serve as external committee members on dissertations. I also invite PhD students to work on projects with my coauthors and get them involved in professional service to the Academy of Management. In 2011-2012, while I was on faculty development leave (FDL) I began research projects with colleagues at Temple, Drexel, and Wake Forest Universities. When I returned from FDL I invited two UTA PhD students - Dennis Marquardt and Hoda Vaziri – to collaborate on these projects which were both published in the top journal in organizational behavior (*Journal of Applied Psychology)* in 2018.

I see PhD students as junior colleagues and love passing on what I have learned about doing good research by collaborating with them. A key priority for me is ensuring PhD students have publications for success on the job market. From the day students enter the PhD program, I talk with them about how papers they write in class can be springboards for research projects that eventually become publications. In 2012, Dennis Marquardt wrote a paper in my Experimental Design class which I encouraged him to move forward with, and that paper was eventually published in *Journal of Business Ethics* in 2016. I have coauthored journal articles, book chapters or proceedings with 21 different PhD students, and presented papers at conferences with many more. My personal goal is to publish in the best outlets in my field, so I engage students with these same goals (for top-tier work) on papers that I think have a good chance of landing in these outlets. At the same time, as many PhD of our students want jobs that balance teaching and research, I adjust collaborative publication efforts to fit a student’s career goals. Good mentoring means putting students first and guiding them to choose publication outlets and careers that best fit their personal goals and aspirations.

Great mentors genuinely care about the well-being and happiness of their mentees. Sometimes this means supporting students through work or personal challenges. It is often the social support we provide that helps keep students on track and get them done with their dissertation. For our many international students, concerns related to immigration often place stress on them. This was a major stressor for my PhD student Faezeh Amirkamali, who went home to Iran at the end of 2016 and was unable to return as planned in early 2017 due to the travel ban. During the 6 months she was outside the US we kept in close contact and she eventually returned to the US in August 2017, defended her dissertation, and graduated in 2018 to start a new job as an Assistant Professor at Marist College.

Supporting PhD students can require creative efforts to help them navigate especially difficult situations. Such was the case when our college faced a tragic loss of a PhD student, Carla Buss, when she passed away from late-stage cancer in 2012 shortly after her diagnosis. Carla was a role model, friend, and mentor to many PhD students and her loss was felt deeply. Shortly after she passed away, I worked with several PhD students to set up an endowment to start a scholarship in her memory. PhD students worked closely with me to fundraise for the scholarship and many were donors themselves. Working with the students helped them process their grief, and today the Carla Buss Memorial Scholarship is awarded each spring to an outstanding PhD student who not only exhibits academic excellence but is also a great role model who offers support and mentoring to more junior students. To further honor Carla’s memory and build a sense of community in the PhD program, each year the winner of the Carla Buss Scholarship leads the PhD students in a service project to benefit a local nonprofit such as Mission Arlington. My work with the PhD students setting up this scholarship and awarding it each year has allowed me to encourage students to not only “produce” on the research front but to build a collaborative climate in the PhD program in which students support and help one another. In doing so it is my hope to graduate PhDs from the UTA College of Business who are not only great teachers and researchers but also genuinely care about creating a positive and developmental climate for the students and colleagues who they serve in their academic career.

Finally, as the current Director of PhD programs for the College of Business I look out for the interests of all PhD students, working closely with the advisors for our 6 PhD program areas to ensure fair allocation of resources and to put initiatives into practice to develop our PhD students and foster their success. From 2014-2016 I served as Area Coordinator for the management PhD program, overseeing admissions and advising all first and second year PhD students studying management before they identified a dissertation chair. For the past 5 years while serving as Director of the College of Business PhD Programs, I support 6 Area Coordinators and 74 PhD students in the College. As PhD Director I often must intervene to resolve student problems and in doing so I abide by my philosophy to be tough but kind. During my tenure as Director I have improved existing programs and launched new ones to foster PhD student development. For example, while we have long offered students formal training in teaching, a few years ago I worked with Peggy Semingson, who teaches this class, to add a component to educate students about effective online teaching, given the large number of PhD graduates who were being asked to teach online in their new jobs. I stay in close contact with students and PhD advisors to monitor trends in our students’ strengths and their areas for development. A key area where I identified many weaknesses among our PhD students was in writing. Thus, last fall I hired Tatia Jordan, an English PhD, to annually teach an academic writing class to College of Business PhD students. This course has been well-received by students and faculty members have reported improvements in student writing. To further strengthen PhD student writing, we also now offer a 1 credit independent study with Dr. Jordan where she coaches students on writing and teaches them to edit their own work. I also have ongoing projects to enhance the PhD program. I am currently gathering data as part of a PhD alumni survey to determine what steps we might take to better engage PhD alumni with our current PhD students. Depending on the results of the survey, I anticipate initiating a mentoring program to match current PhD students with PhD alums who can provide additional support and connections to the professional community. It has been a great honor to direct PhD programs in the college and to work toward institutionalizing a culture where high standards coexist with supportive and respectful treatment of students and colleagues.