Regents' Excellence in Teaching & Learning
Felton Jenkins, Jr. Hall of Fame Faculty Award

Kimberly Anne Hays
Associate Professor of Biology, Dalton State College

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October 26, 2020

Selection Committee - Felton Jenkins Jr. Faculty Hall of Fame Award
University System of Georgia
270 Washington St SW
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Selection Committee:

It is a pleasure to write this letter supporting Dr. Kimberly Hays' portfolio and application for the Felton Jenkins Jr. Faculty Hall of Fame Award at the University System of Georgia (USG). Dr. Hays is an Associate Professor of Biology at Dalton State College. She serves as an excellent role model for other professors, in the USG system, on the best practices in blending teaching, service, and scholarship as a faculty member and deserves the honor of being selected for the Felton Jenkins Jr. Faculty Hall of Fame.

The first criterion for this award is the faculty member is "strongly committed to teaching and learning" (USG website, 2020). Dr. Hays is an active participant and leader in teaching and learning activities on our campus, including leading faculty workshops and seminars and critical conversations book groups – even leading a book group on *Missoula: Rape and Justice in a College Town* for faculty and staff. She participated in two Chancellor's Faculty Learning Communities and was selected, with her colleagues, to attend the Howard Hughes Medical Institute National Institute on Scientific Teaching.

Dr. Hays integrates alternative instructional practices in her teaching to ensure that her students receive high-quality instruction, even during disrupted semesters. She spends much of her summer engaged in faculty webinars with the USG Office of Faculty Development and other groups to ensure her teaching keeps up with her students' current needs. This year, Dr. Hays and her STEM colleagues are a finalist for the HHMI Inclusive Excellence grant program. This achievement further demonstrates her desire to serve Dalton State's students and ensure that they can access transformative educational experiences in a diverse, caring environment.

The second criterion for this award is, "use effective teaching strategies to enhance student learning, including, but not limited to innovative uses of technology, active learning, learning communities, student portfolios, and assessment" (USG website, 2020). Dr. Hays' efforts to engage students in research and other High Impact Practices and her teaching with flipped pedagogy have offered modeling for others in the STEM field. Her teaching evaluations are excellent, and her reflective stance as an educator is notable. A common theme running through student comments is that they find her "tough but fair." While Dr. Hays holds high expectations for her students, she works with them to meet and or to exceed those expectations – even when they did not think it was possible. Dr. Hays is a versatile instructor teaching everything from certificate level to senior capstone courses. Two of her most popular

upper-level biology courses, Ecotoxicology and Field Biology Techniques, were developed with student engagement in mind. When designing courses, Dr. Hays focuses on backward design to ensure that her assignments and activities work cohesively to meet the course objectives and prepare students for their next step. Many of her upper-level biology courses are writing-intensive to arm students with the reading, research, and writing skills that will benefit them in any career field.

In another example of innovation, this semester in a certificate-level course for LPNs, Dr. Hays focused on patient education. Her students developed infographics to educate patients on common medical diagnoses. This diversity in course design demonstrates that Dr. Hays' is focused on equipping students with knowledge and skills for lifelong success. Singmaster (2019) describes that engaged STEM majors have much better persistence to graduation, and Dr. Hays' pedagogy clearly, models this strategy. Not only have her teaching strategies worked to keep students engaged, but this work was also recognized by the campus in the awarding of the Dalton State Foundation Faculty Excellence Award for Teaching in 2015.

The third criterion for the award is that a faculty member "has a strong commitment to fostering the academic success of students through interaction with students outside of the classroom (e.g., advising, mentoring, recruiting, etc.)" (USG website, 2020). Dr. Hays' supports student success and models this for her peers through her engaged work with students. Her creation of service-learning opportunities and her undergraduate research projects are at the heart of her student success strategies as a faculty member. Over the past few years, she has mentored seven research students, 11 independent readings students, and 22 Service-Learning students. These highly engaged practices have relied on building relationships with students outside of the classroom and providing one-on-one mentoring to prepare them for their next steps like graduate school or the workforce. The students participating in these opportunities have presented their research at professional conferences like the Association of Southeastern Biologists and Southeastern Ecology and Evolution. Several of these students have won awards for the best presentation. Dr. Hays is a proactive advisor and sees each advisee interaction as an additional opportunity for mentoring. The campus community awarded her the Dean's Award for Faculty Advising in 2019 to recognize her work with students. Dr. Hays is a proud first-generation college graduate who makes mentoring of students a significant part of her campus life. Her portfolio, documents, and support letters illustrate Dr. Hays' dedication to her students and their academic life.

In closing, the portfolio that Dr. Hays has submitted demonstrates her effectiveness as a faculty member and her essential role in the Dalton State College faculty. I support her application without reservation. If she is selected, she will exemplify what this award stands for: a faculty member whose effective teaching, mentoring, and advising impacts students and makes a difference in their lives. These are the qualities that have led to her numerous campus awards. If I can answer any more questions about her application, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Bruno Hicks

Dr. Bruno G. Hicks
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs

DR. MARINA G. SMITHERMAN
CHAIR, DEPARTMENT OF LIFE SCIENCE,
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

October 30, 2020

Dear Colleague,

It is my pleasure and distinct honor to write this letter of strong support for Dr. Kim Hays as this year's USG Felton Jenkins Jr. Teaching Excellence Award nominee. Dr. Hays has proven herself to be invaluable to Dalton State College and the USG in many ways both inside and outside the classroom. She cares so deeply about our students and our mission to educate students that she engages in many areas of the college and her reputation for excellence is well known in every setting. Dr. Hays truly puts heart and soul into every aspect of her teaching. She goes above and beyond with every opportunity to teach and develop successful students. I firmly believe that no-one deserves this recognition of excellence more and I will outline below why Dr. Hays is an outstanding candidate for this prestigious recognition of her teaching excellence.

An enthusiastic, passionate, and dedicated teacher who cares immensely about the long and short-term success of her students, Dr. Hays utilizes a wide variety of diverse pedagogical techniques to engage and challenge her students. In addition to active lecturing, she employs classroom discussion techniques, student engagement techniques, formative assessment tools including Top Hat, field trips, student presentations, and hands-on field and lab work. She also adopted OER textbooks for general biology and Human A&P. She is so sought-after by the students she has been called on to develop a wide variety of courses at all undergraduate levels ranging from Environmental Studies, Principles of Biology, Ethics in Science, Human A & P, Ecotoxicology, Field Techniques, and Senior Seminar. Her students routinely comment on a wide range of positive aspects of her classroom experience including her enthusiasm, passion, and knowledge for her subject, thoughtful alignment of all aspects of the course, her sense of humor and down-to-earth attitude, her real-world examples, and her approachable and supportive attitude.

Dr. Hays is a continual learner and consistently develops her scholarly teaching and learning philosophy to help her students succeed. When I served as Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning, Dr. Hays was one of our frequent flyers, signing up for every program offered. She has distinguished herself as someone who works hard to implement new techniques into her classroom, transforming her courses with a view to help her students succeed beyond their wildest dreams. As well as being someone who always shares something useful and supportive for her colleagues, she has implemented many of the techniques that programming covered during her time at Dalton State including active and collaborative learning, use of the classroom response system Top Hat for formative assessment, transparency in learning and teaching, high impact practices, and so much more. Immediately following one of the USG Summer webinars on Course Design, Dr. Hays took the time to backward map her classes and produced incredibly thorough course maps using the technique she had just learned that undoubtedly improved alignment and transparency for her students. Dr. Hays won our Faculty Excellence in Teaching award as soon as she was eligible, and we are proud to have her on faculty.

As part of a small team of three, Kim was instrumental in our application to participate in the HHMI Inclusive Excellence in STEM. Our team was accepted to prepare a full length proposal and participate in the HHMI Inclusive Excellence learning community Spring 2021. This is an exciting opportunity to raise $1M for work on inclusive excellence in STEM and Dr. Hays' interest in this project is as a result of her passion for equity and student success. In accordance with her interest, Dr. Hays has gone above and beyond with her work incorporating High Impact Practices into both her courses and our curriculum because of the data that shows the benefits to our minority student populations far outpaces

traditional college populations. These include undergraduate research, service-learning, internships, collaborative learning, and writing-intensive courses. She has actively promoted and developed our undergraduate research courses by chairing our committee and serving as a mentor.

Dr. Hays believes passionately that excellent teaching is not limited to the classroom but extends to every formal and informal opportunity to interact positively with students. Kim's dedication and passion for good quality advising is infectious. She impressively views advising as another opportunity to teach the students not in a discipline, but in life, and as one of the most pivotal components of student success, degree progress, and retention. As a first-generation college graduate herself, Dr. Hays refers to our students as "her-people" and she works hard to intentionally build relationships that foster open honest communication. Her goal is always to fully support the student whether it is help with course-choices, short or long-term goals, or in particular if they are struggling academically or personally and need to be referred to a services for addition help and guidance. Dr. Hays was the reason we switched to using the term 'Student Hours' to prevent our students believing office hours were time for faculty work, not student help. Students frequently wander into her office for a chat only to leave with a pep talk on what they need to do to graduate and serious discussions about career-paths. The type of time commitment and dedication that this requires is significant and Kim gives of her time willingly because she is passionate about providing our students these opportunities, having needed this support herself. It is this empathy and dedication along with her skills in the classroom and commitment to serving Dalton State that lead me to recommend her to you. The incredibly positive student recommendations presented in her portfolio and everyone one of her annual evaluations along with data on how she has tangibly helped students succeed indicates the positive impact she has every day. She won two awards for her teaching in this area; Faculty Excellence in Advising and the Unsung Hero award through our Dean of Students' office.

Dr. Hays is also passionate about inspiring the next generation of learners. Routinely going to K-12 institutions to present, she was also instrumental in setting up, leading, funding, and teaching our STEM Summer camps for local elementary and middle school students with a view to inspiring the next generation of USG scientists, in particular female and minority students. Dalton State's Summer Science camp were developed with a mission of community outreach, science education, and fun. These week-long, half and whole-day camps gave 2nd-8th grade students the opportunity to experience hands-on science in real science labs and/or field settings. She invested large amounts of time acquiring grant funding for these camps to provide scholarships to children who would not be able to afford to benefit from the experience driven by her own experience as a child growing up in rural Alabama.

You might be wondering what Dr. Hays cannot do and I have yet to find something as she demonstrates excellence in every aspect of teaching. Dr. Hays is a phenomenal teacher and mentor both in and out of the classroom. Every minute of her time is dedicated to helping students be successful in one way or another, which is the reason she is everyone's favorite teacher and advisor. Dr. Hays raises the bar for everyone she works with and does not seek recognition, nor is it the culture at our institution. Dr. Hays' dedication to excellence in teaching and learning and unwavering commitment to student success and equity deserves to be recognized. I recommend her to you highly, without reservation, as the perfect embodiment of this honor and deserved honoree of the Felton Jenkins Jr Teaching Excellence Award.

Kind Regards,

MG Smitherman

Marina G. Smitherman, D.Phil., MPH

Letter from Colleague – Kristen Weiss-Sanders

October 18, 2020

To Whom it May Concern:

I first met Dr. Kimberly Hays towards the end of my first semester working as an adjunct professor in biology at Dalton State College. The assignment I'd been given for my second semester was a lofty one for someone with so little experience – teaching a double section of Anatomy & Physiology I, arguably one of the most intense courses in the undergraduate catalog due to high D, F, and withdrawal rates nationwide.

Kim had also been assigned this course early in her career with limited background and little support in the area. She started by sending me her lecture PowerPoints and lab handouts, and bit by bit she became my unofficial mentor as I ventured through multiple semesters of A&P I and II and I was ultimately hired as a full-time, tenure-track member of the Life Science faculty. I recognize that some of this was out of care for me- she knew what it was like to feel completely underwater as a new professor in these intimidating courses and swore she wouldn't let it happen to anyone else. But even more so, she cared about my students. I had already come to realize how deeply she cared for *her* students, but that instantly extended to *mine*, as well.

Dalton State College is fairly unique in terms of our student body. A huge percentage of our students are first generation college students, as Kim was herself, growing up in rural Alabama before attaining a B.S., M.S., and ultimately PhD. We are the only Hispanic Serving Institution in the state of Georgia, meaning that more than 25% of our student body identifies as Hispanic. We have students who are un-/under-documented. We have students whose parents and extended families are undocumented and may not even speak English, even if the students themselves were born in the United States or came here as very young children and are now under DACA. Nearly all of our students work; many work a full-time job on top of taking a full-time load as a student to support not only themselves, but their families.

Kim is a pillar of support to any student who crosses her radar- an athlete trying to transfer in a bunch of credits and juggle a difficult course load, someone going through a mental health crisis, a student who has come out as LGBT and been rejected by their family of origin, another who is dealing with abuse at the hands of a domestic partner or family member. The single most important thing that she has taught me in our time together is that students are *people*. They come with their own baggage and struggles, many of which are not known to me as I stand at the podium and lecture for hours on the details of anatomy and mechanisms of physiology. I have heard over and over from students that her level of care for them as individuals in above and beyond anything they have ever encountered in a professor. It is my utmost goal to attain the level of trust from my students that Kim has from hers, as I've seen that this level of care and trust between the professor and student is fundamentally crucial for student learning and success.

This doesn't even begin to get into the actual mechanisms of her teaching. Pedagogically, she is always digging into the new literature in teaching and learning and her course design is extremely deliberate. Never one to simply lecture from the podium or distantly survey a lab

section, she incorporates various types of active learning into her classroom, including student response systems (such as TopHat, formerly iClickers), group discussion, and assignments such as sketching tissues seen under a microscope or drawing the location major blood vessels on large sheets with a traced human figure. This semester, during the COVID-19 pandemic she (and I, at her urging), are both utilizing a "flipped" classroom where students watch short lecture videos (5-15 minutes each, usually 4-8 per chapter) and then spend the entire class period on an array of active learning exercises to further explore the material.

There are so many small details that Kim incorporates into her teaching that may go unnoticed by many. She plays music during lab so that students feel more comfortable talking to and working with each other, without the fear of the professor hearing them say something incorrect. She works with the students in her senior seminar (a capstone course required for our B.S. Biology majors) to make sure they have selected a topic that they care enough about to really become invested in and enjoy researching/presenting on throughout the semester.

Kim's work as a science educator is not simply what she does for a living- it's who she is. She regularly participates in the "Skype a Scientist" program and talks to elementary and middle school classrooms across the country about various topics of common interest. She is integrally involved in the DSC summer science camps, including securing the grant funding needed to ensure many of our economically disadvantaged students can attend for free. She tackles some of the most politically fraught realities of science today – climate change, maternal mortality among women of color, and poor public health care in the rural South, for example – not only in her "Ethical Issues in Science" course, but whenever they come up on other settings.

It is an extraordinarily difficult time to be either an educator or a scientist, never mind both. Teaching a full course load of students during a global pandemic, all of whom are feeling the effects of the pandemic in their own way, is indeed unprecedented and something that none of us were trained for. Nor were we ever trained how to respond when science supported by decades of research would come under fire as a "hoax," severely undermining our ability as science educators to communicate even the most pressing issues to both our students and the general public. Kim has handled this situation with all the grace and grit imaginable- always willing to engage in civil discourse, but steadfast in her commitment to the effective communication of scientific fact.

Dr. Kimberly Hays has my highest recommendation for this prestigious award. I am honored to have her as a mentor as always say "I've been taught by the best" when a student tells me that my style of teaching is particularly helpful to them. Thank you for your consideration of her work, as she continues not only to teach, but to serve, the student body of Dalton State College.

Best,

Kristen Weiss Sanders

Kristen Weiss Sanders, M.S.
Assistant Professor, Department of Life Science
Dalton State College

Letter of Support from a Former Student – Cody Beavers, B.S. Biology graduate 2019

To whom it may concern,

It is a privilege to be able to share with you the guiding role that Dr. Kimberly Hays has played on my life over the past four years. Dr. Hays saw me through a personal and professional transformation that I never imagined for myself and offered me support through the darkest days that I have ever experienced. Without the mentorship that I received from her I would not be the person that I have become, and I certainly would not have finished my degree.

When I first met Dr. Hays in the Spring of 2016, I was pursuing an associate degree in business management. I had recently returned to school with the intent of using education to further my career, when I took her Principles of Biology II class. Things were going well for me at the time and her class was highly recommended by my advisor. While in the class, I was inspired by her level of engagement with students. I felt comfortable asking questions and she was remarkable at finding a way to help me understand better. Not only was Dr. Hays teaching me a great deal about the natural world, but she was also helping me understand how I learn and training me to develop more effective learning strategies. It was not long before I knew this was someone I wanted to emulate. After class one day, I mentioned to Dr. Hays that I was considering switching my degree to a B.S. in Biology. She invited me to her office to discuss career options for someone with a degree in biology and current opportunities in the biology program, such as undergraduate research and teaching assistant positions.

In the Spring of 2017, I started my first teaching assistant position in Dr. Hays' Principles of Biology II class. This was my first real experience working for her and learning just how high she sets expectations for herself and her students. She had the details of my TA worked out with administration a semester in advance and we started having planning meetings several weeks prior to the class start date. She set clear expectations for me and offered additional opportunities to develop myself as an educator through weekly meetings and constructive feedback. Dr. Hays encouraged my involvement on campus and arranged for me to attend workshops and meetings regarding diversity, neurodivergent students, and mental health.

During my first semester as her TA, I asked Dr. Hays about getting involved with research. She gave me a brief overview of how undergraduate research worked on campus and guided me through the process of picking a professor with interests that closely aligned with my own. She remained my academic and professional mentor throughout my research journey offering advice and a safe space to discuss ideas and frustrations. Dr. Hays always offered to help me and other research students prepare so that we could represent our school with professionalism and confidence at conferences. Her coaching led me to win a 2nd place award for best undergraduate research at the 2018 meeting of the Association of Southeastern Biologists.

In the Spring of 2018, I was still Dr. Hays' teaching assistant, and my undergraduate research project was going strong. I had recently found a paid internship at the Tennessee Aquarium and I asked Dr. Hays for assistance with my application materials and a letter of recommendation. She spent several hours working on my application materials with me and teaching me how to properly present myself in a professional application packet. I received the internship and was able to get college credits for my experience by doing a Readings in Biology with Dr. Hays. For my Readings in Biology assignment Dr. Hays and I agreed that I would write a grant proposal requesting funding for a project I was involved with as part of my internship with the aquarium. We scheduled weekly meetings and agreed that I would submit publications, required materials, and drafts two days prior to our meetings.

When I started my internship, my financial situation had become dire. Choosing to complete a B.S. had extended the timeframe I was to live on a reduced income, and after a few unforeseen homeowner expenses, I started to fall behind on my bills. At this point, I stopped responding to emails and submitting materials to Dr. Hays and my other professors. After a week of not hearing anything, Dr. Hays sent me firmly worded email expressing concern and warning me that this type of lack of communication would not lead to success as a graduate student. After I read her email, it dawned on me that this person really believed that I could complete a graduate degree. I reflected on all the different times I spent in her office learning how to be an educator and a scientist. After thinking about all the hours that Dr. Hays had spent reviewing assignments, writing letters, and pushing me to succeed in my goals, I knew that I could pull through this situation. I sent her a text telling her that I was sitting outside of my internship thinking about how my home was being foreclosed on and wondering where my next meal would be coming from. I did not know what else to say and I didn't know what to expect back, but I knew that I needed to communicate with her.

Within a matter of minutes, Dr. Hays had sent me contact information and business hours for a school operated foodbank and told me not to worry about the assignment. She made arrangements so that I could finish the proposal the following semester and offered to schedule a meeting with one of the school counselors for me. Dr. Hays did everything within her capacity to help me and that gave me strength to make the effort and return to campus. A few weeks later, I started the bankruptcy process and had a nervous breakdown, while having a conversation with Dr. Hays. She convinced me to go to a counselor and after I left her office, she called ahead to tell them I was in route. This is the single greatest thing anyone has ever done for me. Dr. Hays could recognize that I was in a dark place, and she made sure that I got the help I needed. Afterwards, she frequently checked in with me to make sure the counseling was going well and that I was still doing the best I was able to do in my classes.

I went on to participate in an NSF REU at Eastern Kentucky University. This opportunity was made possible by a connection I made at the Association of Southeastern Biologists meeting. Dr. Hays quickly wrote me a letter of recommendation and even offered to drive me to Kentucky herself when I wasn't sure if my vehicle would make it there. Now, I am in the process of applying to graduate programs and still continue to communicate with Dr. Hays for advice, guidance, and letters of reference. I may not be a Dalton State student any longer, but the time and energy she devotes to her mentorship remains unchanged.

While at Dalton State, I was inspired by and worked with many professors, but none who took such an active interest in making sure I received my degree as Dr. Hays. Not only did she make sure I had the resources that I needed to finish my program of study, but she never stopped encouraging me to pursue graduate school. She never stopped offering me opportunities to grow professionally or personally. Dr. Hays saw me at my weakest moment and used it as an opportunity to build me up, she transformed and possibly even saved my life, when I desperately needed it. Dr. Kimberly Hays is much more than a professor, she is a science communicator, a mentor, and a role-model. Dalton State College and the University System of Georgia are lucky to have such a passionate and caring educator among their ranks.

Sincerely,

Cody Beavers
B.S. Biology, Dalton State College

Letter of Support from a Current Student- Britney Perry, B.S. Biology Student

Britney Perry
Dalton State College Senior
October 26, 2020

To USG Office of Academic Affairs Special Regents Committee:

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter of recommendation of Dr. Kimberly Hays for the Felton Jenkins Jr. Hall of Fame for the state college sector award. I have spent two consecutive years at Dalton State College as a student. I am graduating in the fall of 2020 and in large part directly due to Dr. Hays. The countless hours Dr. Hays devotes to her students well-being and success is quite simply unmatched at Dalton State College. Dr. Hays is surpassingly qualified and deserving of this award because I and many others do not take her classes by chance, we chose her above all.

Before I enrolled in a class with Dr. Hays she came as a guest speaker in our research methods class. She spoke to us about her life journey thus far and the challenges and triumphs along the way. She made us feel welcomed and we knew we weren't alone in this scary college world. I have taken four classes with her and every time she was consistent, well organized, inspiring and fair. I am a nontraditional student as I went back to college later in life and she went out of her way to show me I can be just as successful as my younger peers. Dr. Hays would always ask the class on feedback to help us improve not only as students but how she could better serve us a teacher. When COVID hit, she never skipped a beat we moved flawlessly into an online format and she repeatedly reached out and checked in on us because our safety and health was her number one priority.

Outside of the classroom setting Dr. Hays is just the same as inside the classroom. She routinely made herself available to us even if it was outside of student hours. Field Techniques was the most memorable class as she took us outside to the community and we got to see first-hand what biology was all about. At Dalton Utilities, a former student gave us a tour and praised Dr. Hays for the support and guidance throughout his college student years. Dr. Hays doesn't stop working when class is done and the semester or academic year is finished. She sends links to us on volunteer work, future graduate programs and where to look for careers regardless of your path. She is a wealth of knowledge and she never stops working for her students and colleagues.

I am beyond grateful to have studied under the guidance of Dr. Hays. I and many others have shared they are better, not only as a student but better as an individual as a direct result of Dr. Hays tutelage. The impact Dr. Hays has on the students she educates is unmatched. Her infamous wit and humor is unique and memorable. I strongly believe she is model for what a college professor should be and exemplary candidate for this honor.

Sincerely,

Britney Perry

Kimberly Anne Hays, Ph.D.

Academic Appointments and Other Significant Work Experience

- Eligibility Chair, Southern States Athletic Conference, 2019 – Present
- Associate Professor of Biology, Dalton State 2018 – Present (promoted from Temporary and Assistant)
- Assistant Professor of Biology, Shorter University, 2011-2012
- Post-doctoral Research Fellow, Oklahoma State University, 2011

Education

- Ph.D. Zoology, Oklahoma State University (Stillwater, OK), 2010
- M.S. Zoology, Oklahoma State University (Stillwater, OK), 2005
- B.S. Biology, Jacksonville State University (Jacksonville, AL), 2002

Select Professional Development

Teaching and Learning Professional Development

- HHMI IE3 Learning Community, 2020
- Chancellor's Faculty Learning Community, 2019-2020
- HHMI/National Academies Education Fellow in the Life Sciences, 2014-2015

Professional Service

- Association of Southeastern Biologists, Archivist and Social Media Manager, Present
- Southern States Athletic Conference, Women's Leadership Committee Co-chair; SFE Diversity Committee; Membership Committee; Eligibility Committee, Present
- Reviewed manuscripts for the following: *CourseSource*, *Journal of Toxicology and Environmental Health: Part A*, *PLOS One*, 2012 – Present

Awards

- Southern States Athletic Conference Charles Morris Administrator of the Year, 2020
- Dalton State College Dean's Award for Excellence in Faculty Advising, 2019
- Dalton State College Truett Lomax Unsung Hero Award, 2018 – 2019
- Dalton State Foundation Faculty Excellence Award for Service, 2017
- Dalton State Foundation Faculty Excellence Award for Teaching, May 2015
- National Academies Education Fellow in the Life Sciences, 2014-2015

Grants

- Supporting Scholarships for DSC STEM Summer Camps
    - Shaw Industries Community Grant, 2019
    - North Georgia Electric Cooperative Operation Round-Up grant, 2019
    - Engineered Floors Community Support Grant, 2018, 2019
    - Alliance for Innovation in Sustainability, 2018

    - Northwest Georgia Community Foundation, 2018
- Supporting Mental Health Training
    - Dalton State College Foundation Campus Enrichment Grant

Student Experiential Learning at Dalton State College

- **Readings in Biology**
    - Students completed an individual project focused on educational and career goals
        - 6 students completed in-depth literature reviews
        - 2 students completed research proposals outlining a future project
        - 2 students completed lesson plans aligned with Georgia standards
- **Research in Biology**
    - Students completed a lab or field-based research project from conception through data collection and analysis and presented their results at a conference
        - 7 students completed research projects and presented at Dalton State College Student Research Symposium, Association of Southeastern Biologists, Southeastern Ecology and Evolution Conference
- **Service Learning in Biology**
    - Students completed a hands-on experience in the life sciences and participated in reflective writing at the completion of their experience
        - 15 students served as Undergraduate Teaching Assistants in Principles of Biology I, Human A&P I & II, Field Biology Techniques
        - 2 students completed off-campus internships at Atlanta Wild Animal Rescue Effort (AWARE) and Chattanooga Zoo
        - 1 student revised "The Ecology Game" lab from BIOL 1108K
        - 4 students served as curatorial assistants in the Annie Mills Smith Malacology Collection at Dalton State College

Select Service at Dalton State College

- Dalton State College Faculty Athletics Representative, 2017 – Present
- Chair, STEM Student Development committee, 2018 - Present
- Coordinator, Dalton State STEM Summer Camps, 2017-2019
- School of STM Undergraduate Research Committee, Co-Chair, 2015 – 2018
- Campus Assessment, Response, and Evaluation (CARE) Team, 2015 – 2018
- Internal Assessment Committee, DSC Counseling Services, Chair, 2015 – 2016
- School of STM Faculty Evaluation Committee, 2015-2016
- School of STM Assessment Committee, 2012- 2016
- Dalton State College Assessment Committee, Chair, Fall 2014 – Spring 2015
- Various community outreach events
    - Classroom & community presentations, > 40 presentations to >500 students
    - DSC Summer Science Camps coordinator, 2017 – 2019
    - Discover Science at DSC with GS Greater Atl., 5^{th} – 8^{th} grade girls, 2015-2018

Reflective Statement of Teaching & Learning Philosophy and Objectives

At Dalton State College, I have the opportunity to teach every type of student imaginable. I found that despite the differences in their backgrounds and future goals, these students share some commonalities–they want to be successful, find sense of belonging, find an environment that will push them academically, and be in a space where they can be wrong. While many of our students may not be able to articulate these desires, I have seen it play out semester after semester and I saw this in my own experience as a first-generation college student. These commonalities and my own experience aided me in developing my purpose and philosophy of teaching: be the teacher you needed, but remember every student is not you. This philosophy reminds me to meet my students where they are and try and bring the kindness, empathy, toughness, understanding, and rigor that my best professors provided. While in all of my courses, I seek to provide basic knowledge and appreciation of the life sciences and to aid students in acquiring a lens and skill set with which they can navigate their chosen career field; I now recognize that my teaching philosophy stretches far beyond the subjects I teach. My goal is for students to gain the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to move forward in their education and their lives. This goal and my philosophy developed the following that guide my course design, classroom interactions, and out of class mentoring.

Objective 1 – Help students define success

Often when a student enters my classroom, their definition of success is tied to the grade they receive at the end of the term; however, I help students redefine success to incorporate the knowledge and skills they acquire throughout the course. While I always want students to receive a high grade, moving their focus away from the letter grade and onto the skills they are gaining, inevitably results in a higher final grade. One strategy I use is to incorporate intentional scaffolding of large projects or papers, which allows students to build their skills and receive actionable feedback throughout the semester. This method boosts student confidence because it breaks a seemingly overwhelming task into smaller steps and helps students incorporate feedback along the way. Ultimately, their improvement becomes part of their definition of student success.

Objective 2 – Help students find purpose and sense of belonging

The current DSC student is often balancing their academic career with a rigorous work schedule, familial obligations, a long commute, or unexpected changes in course delivery that make engagement difficult. For these reasons, I construct courses and outside experiences that help students find their purpose and sense of belonging during and after their degree. In some courses, this means helping students to consider career options and opportunities by bringing in outside speakers or connecting students with campus resources like Career and Professional Development. For other courses, I it is removing the notion of competition and replacing it with a cooperative classroom in which peers celebrate each other's success. Sometimes this looks like peer-review or editing of writing assignments, partner led group discussions where students steer the conversation and are free to challenge one another, lab or field work that depends on the work of many to accomplish a single task, and in class collaboration to correct misconceptions and build knowledge. Through these shared classroom experiences students begin to build relationships, even virtually, and become invested in each other's success.

Objective 3 – Push students academically
Most of my students would probably agree with the statement "Dr. Hays has really high expectations", but they usually follow it up with "but she will always help you meet them." I want my students to know that "just enough" effort is often them selling short their skills and abilities. By placing high expectations and building courses in a way that equip them with the skills and knowledge to meet those expectations, students often leave the semester with a sense of awe at what they accomplished. In two courses with lofty semester-long assignments, a lengthy review paper and seminar presentation, students often counter with "I have never written anything that long" or "There is no way I can talk in front of the class.". However, a few short months later these students deliver products beyond their own wildest imaginations. They simply needed the push, the structure, and my confidence in them before they could develop confidence in their own abilities. It truly is an honor to watch this confidence carry over into their personal and professional lives and to hear from them as alumni.

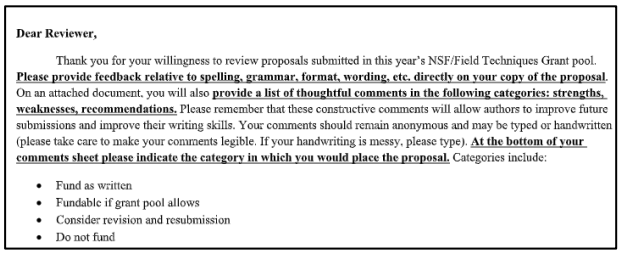
Objective 4 – Give students the space to make mistakes
I had a student tell me "I am just really scared to be wrong and be judged by you and the students in the class." I vowed from that point on that my classroom would be a place that we embrace the wrong answer. I want to help students get to the right answer, correct their misconceptions, and move them forward in content knowledge; however, if students are afraid of being wrong, they will never have that opportunity. To help banish the fear, students, particularly in my lower level courses, are given the opportunity to work individually on formative assessments and then again with their peers. When the pressure is lifted just a bit, students begin to flourish. The freedom to make a mistake, to think it through and try again, has had a huge impact on my classes. Students invest in each other, learn how to defend and explain their answers, but also know that fixing their mistake now helps them to be better in the future.

My commitment to my students can be seen in the classroom environment I build, the opportunities for learning in and out of the classroom, the extensive training courses and conferences I attended, and simply the time I take to get to know my students and their goals and aspirations. My life was radically changed by my college experience and the caring (and tough) professors who challenged me personally and academically. Without their support I would not have been academically successful, and I would not have had the opportunity to pursue post-graduate education. While I may only have a student for a 15-week semester, I have a small opportunity to expose them to scientific principles, arm them with new skills, and help foster a sense of self-confidence in their knowledge and abilities.

Teaching Artifacts & Practices

Collaborative & scaffolded writing assignments: After hearing back from many DSC graduates that went on to graduate school or to work in the field, many reported that their biggest weakness was their writing skills and professional communication. I include writing-intensive assignments in all of my courses. All of these assignments are scaffolded and include collaborative components that allow students to provide feedback to their peers through the writing process. These assignments include:

Field Biology Techniques Research Proposal While the main focus of Field Biology Techniques is hands-on field biology experience, a critical portion of the course is reading and understanding peer reviewed literature and experimental design. The goal of this assignment is to help students read and understand peer reviewed literature, think about experimental design, and experience what it is like to apply for research funding. The format is modified from the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program. In addition to completing their own proposal, students peer-review their classmates' proposals and determine which would be recommended for funding. The assignment is scaffolded with a complete draft and revision cycle.



Dear Reviewer,

Thank you for your willingness to review proposals submitted in this year's NSF/Field Techniques Grant pool. **Please provide feedback relative to spelling, grammar, format, wording, etc. directly on your copy of the proposal.** On an attached document, you will also **provide a list of thoughtful comments in the following categories: strengths, weaknesses, recommendations.** Please remember that these constructive comments will allow authors to improve future submissions and improve their writing skills. Your comments should remain anonymous and may be typed or handwritten (please take care to make your comments legible. If your handwriting is messy, please type). **At the bottom of your comments sheet please indicate the category in which you would place the proposal.** Categories include:

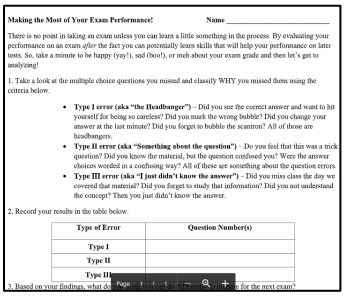
- Fund as written
- Fundable if grant pool allows
- Consider revision and resubmission
- Do not fund

Ecotoxicology Literature Review In an effort to help students gain experience in research, reading and understanding peer reviewed literature, and written communication, students in Ecotoxicology are tasked with writing a 10-page literature review of an ecotoxicological topic of their choice. The assignment, much like the one above, is scaffolded with a complete draft and revision cycle and involves peer-review feedback. Because Ecotoxicology is a rapidly evolving discipline this assignment gives students vast experience and understanding in data interpretation, statistical analyses, and laboratory methods.

Critical Self-Refection: Often, students see grades as something to be celebrated or grieved, but rarely do they take the time to critically reflect on their performance. I incorporate critical reflection into my courses in several ways:

Exam follow-up surveys: In lower-level courses, these anonymous surveys include questions like: Were you satisfied with your score on the exam? When did you begin studying for the exam? Did you prepare differently for this exam than previous exams? Does your score reflect the effort you put into preparing for the exam? Question 4 is often the most telling, and the results of this survey often open up a class wide discussion on ways to study and engage with the course content.

Exam correction assignment: This post-exam activity allows students to use their mistakes as a learning experience and improve their study and test taking skills. They categorize missed questions based on the type of error and go on to explain *why* their chosen answer is incorrect. Students quickly begin to see patterns in their errors and are able to improve their study skills and exam preparation.



Making the Most of Your Exam Performance! **Name** _____

There is no point in taking an exam unless you can learn a little something in the process. By evaluating your performance on an exam *after* the fact you can potentially learn skills that will help your performance on later tests. So, take a minute to be happy (yay!), sad (boo!), or meh about your exam grade and then let's get to analyzing!

1. Take a look at the multiple choice questions you missed and classify WHY you missed them using the criteria below.

- **Type I error (aka "the Headbanger")** – Did you see the correct answer and want to hit yourself for being so careless? Did you mark the wrong bubble? Did you change your answer at the last minute? Did you forget to bubble the scantron? All of those are headbangers.
- **Type II error (aka "Something about the question")** – Do you feel that this was a trick question? Did you know the material, but the question confused you? Were the answer choices worded in a confusing way? All of these are something about the question errors.
- **Type III error (aka "I just didn't know the answer")** – Did you miss class the day we covered that material? Did you forget to study that information? Did you not understand the concept? Then you just didn't know the answer.

2. Record your results in the table below.

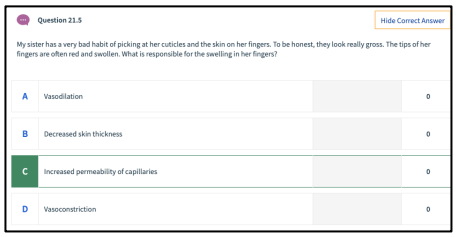
Type of Error	Question Number(s)
Type I	
Type II	
Type III	

3. Based on your findings, what do[illegible] for the next exam?

Personal ethical reflections: In Ethical Issues in Science, a discussion based course, students are asked to complete 5 personal reflections over the course of the semester. These 350-500 word, prompted reflections give students the opportunity to reflect on how the course discussions on various ethical issues relate to their own lives. A recent prompt read: "If you were to write your own personal code of ethics, like a business or organization does, what would it say? How does your ethical code influence your personal, professional, and academic conduct? What is the source of YOUR personal ethical code? (Think hard on this one! Please don't just say "that is how I was raised" or "this is what my church believes." Now is the time many of you are developing a PERSONAL ethical code for yourselves. It may align with your familial or faith background and it may not. What makes it YOURS?)".

The final course reflection allows students to choose a topic from the semester and reflect on that topic and the impact the discussion had on them. The most impactful responses seem to include the phrases "I had never considered…"

Collaborative Formative Assessment: Many of the courses I teach are full of highly detailed processes and concepts that build over the course of several semesters. I incorporate a formative assessment into almost every class period I have with students. The bulk of this assessment is completed using TopHat, an app-based student response system. I typically open each class with 3-5 TopHat questions over material covered in the previous lecture. These questions, fall under apply, analyze, and evaluate within Bloom's taxonomy, and seek to determine if students actually *understand* the concepts rather than if they have successfully memorized facts. Each question is presented to students twice. The first opportunity allows students to answer the question solo. I share the results with students, but do not tell them the correct answer. They are then given the opportunity to discuss their answers in a small group before they re-submit. I have found that this method allows students to correct their misconceptions in a low-pressure environment and peer-to-peer explanation often helps break through walls of misunderstanding. Students are awarded a small number of points for these activities that incentivize attendance, participation, and success.



Criteria 1 – Evidence of Strong Commitment to Teaching and Learning

As a teacher, it is critical that I am also a continuous learner in the scholarship of teaching and learning. My commitment to my own education is evident in my participation in activities that allow me to broaden my skillset, critical thinking skills, and pedological knowledge.

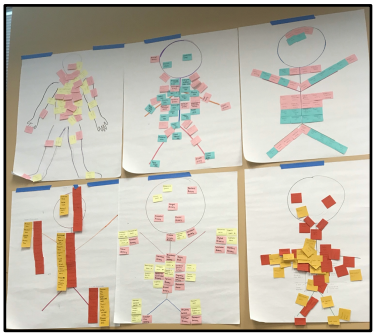
Dalton State College Professional Development

DSC has provided significant opportunities for professional development and I have participated in well over 20 workshops and book groups on topics including pedagogy, faculty development, active learning, and mental health topics. I lead a critical conversations book group for faculty and staff on *Missoula: Rape and Justice in a College Town* and a book group for my research students on *Pushback: How Smart Women Ask and Stand-Up for What They Want.*

Chancellor's Faculty Learning Communities

The Chancellor's Faculty Learning Community program, implemented in 2019-2020, gives me the opportunity to meet with and learn from DSC faculty across all disciplines and discuss new strategies for teaching and engagement. The first CFLC focused on the book *Small Teaching* by James M. Lang and the second on *How Humans Learn* by Joshua Eyler. These meetings were invigorating and filled my notepad with myriad new ideas to incorporate into my classes but even more helped me to build connections with my colleagues across campus as we all endeavor to find better ways to serve our students.

Comments from leader of the CFLC include: "I was thrilled when Dr. Hays volunteered to participate in our Chancellor's Faculty Learning Community on small teaching techniques during the Fall 19 semester. Faculty members from multiple disciplines across campus gathered regularly to discuss innovative teaching tips based on Lang's book *Small Teaching*. Dr. Hays had already read the book and in her very engaging way, explained how she had adapted some of these techniques for her classes. As the discussion progressed, I realized the concepts of retrieving, predicting, interleaving, and connecting had been utilized by Dr. Hays for many years. She described wall size concept maps that she had her students create in order to engage them, help them make connections, and build their comprehension of complex topics. When a second opportunity to participate in the Spring 20 FLC was offered, Dr. Hays quickly volunteered and actively participated. Again, she devoured Eyler's book *How Humans Learn* and brought examples of how she was using his techniques in her classroom. The concepts of creating a social classroom, sparking creativity, evoking students' emotions, and being authentic come naturally to Dr. Hays and she utilized each of these assets in her courses. She is also a master at creating discussion boards, storytelling, and the use of technology. Dr. Hays genuinely cares for her students, and this caring drives the time and effort she constantly puts forward to stay on the forefront of teaching and learning. She is a superb example for both novice and experienced college teachers." -- Lisa Peden, MSN, RN, Associate Professor of Nursing, Chancellor's Scholar, Dalton State College



<u>HHMI Inclusive Excellence 3 (IE3) Finalist</u>

The HHMI IE3 program challenges colleges to "substantially and sustainably increase their capacity for inclusion of all students, especially those students who belong to groups underrepresented in science." I was invited, in 2019, to join a team that would submit an HHMI IE3 pre-proposal focused on retention and representation of all students pursuing STEM degrees at DSC. Our proposal focuses on data collection and critical conversations with students, faculty, and staff regarding sense of belonging, inclusive excellence, implementation of reflective communities of practice for faculty and staff, and backwards redesign of critical courses. Our proposal was named as a finalist in this program and is now part of the HHMI IE3 Learning Community which will allow our team to engage in the work of inclusive excellence via virtual meetings with other finalist institutions as we continue the work in preparing our final proposal. I felt strongly prepared for my participation on the HHMI IE3 team due to my participation in the 2014 HHMI National Institute on Scientific Teaching. This weeklong program allowed our team to get deep experience in active learning, inclusive-teaching, and assessment strategies.

"Dr. Kim Hays was truly the backbone of the HHMI grant that we (including myself and Dr. Marina Smitherman) submitted in Spring 2020. Her insight into the issues faced by Dalton State College faculty provided the framework around which the entire pre-proposal was built. Her superb writing skills provided answers to each question posed in a concise yet extraordinarily elegant fashion. Her contribution to the pre-proposal was obviously the key to making it to the second phase of the proposal process. – Samantha Blair, Ph.D., Assoc. Prof. Astronomy, DSC

Comments from Peer Evaluation of Teaching

"Kim is about as comfortable as anyone I have ever observed in a classroom setting. She is interactive keeping the students involved with intermittent questions and clearly the students are comfortable asking Kim questions when they are a little fuzzy on some aspect of the subject matter. Her interactive exercise seemed very helpful to connect material learned in lab that morning to the lecture topics today. I have NOTHIHNG else to mention, because her lecture was excellent! Keep doing the fantastic work that you ALWAYS have done every time I have observed you!!" – James Adams, Ph.D., Professor of Biology, Dalton State College

"Kim is clearly comfortable and confident as she discusses the course material. It appears that she is enjoying her time with the students! She directs a lot of questions toward her students and received responses from a variety of students. She works hard to get everyone to participate and uses students' names as she addresses them." – John Lugthart, Ph.D., Professor of Biology, Dalton State College

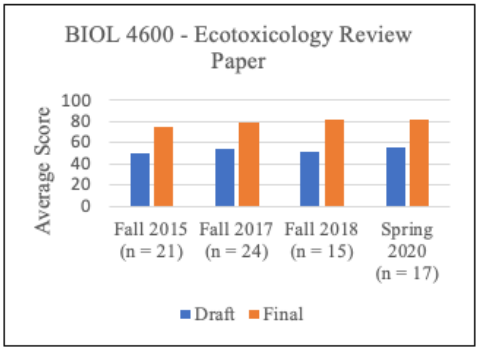
"Kim's passion for quality, individualized education is what sets her apart from most of my other colleagues. She approaches each course as an individual teaching experience, tailoring the course material to the needs of her current students. Upon teaching the course again, Kim often adapts or changes the material to keep students engaged. I have seen the heavily edited drafts of student papers, that Kim has toiled over in order to help a student improve their scientific writing skills. Kim has given her own time to do individual and group study sessions. I believe her efforts truly enhance the educational experience of students that encounter her." – Richard Pirkle, MS, Senior Instructor of Biology, Tennessee Tech University

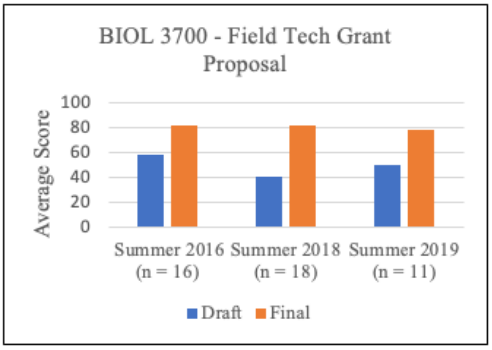
Criteria 2 – Use of Effective Teaching Strategies to Enhance Student Learning

My goal in the classroom is always to set high expectations but to build a scaffold that helps students to achieve these goals. The following provides my insight and student responses to various strategies used across the courses I teach.

Feedback and Peer Review of Writing Assignments in Ecotoxicology & Field Biology

My students often view writing as a task to be completed rather than a process of draft and revisions. To help students in my Ecotoxicology (BIOL 4600) and Field Biology Techniques (BIOL 3700) improve their writing skills, they are tasked with a literature review and grant proposal, respectively. These assignments are scaffolded from the beginning and include individual topic discussion meetings, in class topic "pitches" to their peers, production of a complete draft, instructor feedback on their draft with a "what if" grade using the rubric, peer review of at least 2 peer papers, a final revision, and a post assignment debrief.



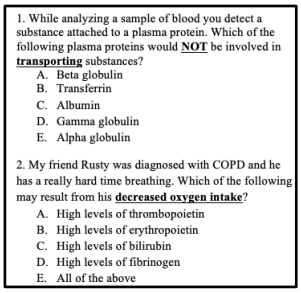


While these steps can be cumbersome in a large course, they provide student products that are astonishing. Students grasp the content they are writing about *and* the writing process itself far better than they would in a single draft. Evidence supports that this technique was effective in both courses. As seen in the figures above, the average student score increased by 26 points in Ecotoxicology and 31 points in Field Biology Techniques.
Anonymous student comments on these assignments: "The review paper was extremely helpful. We got to practice our writing, our understanding of scientific literature, and our communication skills with others. It was definitely time consuming, but it was extremely helpful." – BIOL 4600 student, Fall 2017

"Rubrics and very clear, detailed explanations – Dr. Hays is one of my favorite professors for this reason. I know she expects a lot, but she places high expectations on herself by taking 5-7 p papers home and dedicating her whole weekend to provide thorough, constructive comments and grades. This helps me, as a student, understand where I need to improve without taking a beating on the paper itself because it is not perfect." – BIOL 3700 student, Summer 2016

Case Studies and Application Questions in Human Anatomy & Physiology

The majority of students in Human A&P at DSC, are focused on transitioning into health professions with a large percentage of the students pursing their ASN and BSN degrees at DSC. In order to prepare my A&P students for the rigor of the nursing program, medical school, and the associated licensure tests, I worked closely with the nursing faculty to discuss not just *what* students need to know but *how* they need to be prepared for success in their next step. I place a large emphasis on collaborative case study discussions in lab and in application style questions used in formative and summative assessment. There is a steep learning curve for my students who are often asked to think beyond memorization for the first time, but the feedback from my students when they move to their next steps only confirms that these tools enhance their learning.


1. While analyzing a sample of blood you detect a substance attached to a plasma protein. Which of the following plasma proteins would **NOT** be involved in **transporting** substances?
   A. Beta globulin
   B. Transferrin
   C. Albumin
   D. Gamma globulin
   E. Alpha globulin

2. My friend Rusty was diagnosed with COPD and he has a really hard time breathing. Which of the following may result from his **decreased oxygen intake**?
   A. High levels of thrombopoietin
   B. High levels of erythropoietin
   C. High levels of bilirubin
   D. High levels of fibrinogen
   E. All of the above

Solicited comments about these assignments: "Dr. Hays' Human Anatomy and Physiology II class was critical for helping me get into and succeed in nursing school at DSC. Every class session included a set of questions which reviewed material previously covered and previewed what we would cover that day. These allowed the class to continuously prepare for the upcoming exam and gave a real-time view of what we understood and what needed review. Additionally, every portion of our classroom time was interactive. Dr. Hays went out of her way to both ask us questions and draw out our own questions, so class was an open dialogue that improved engagement and understanding of the material." – David Peyton, ASN DSC '20, Nurse Resident, Grady Memorial Hospital

"In the semester that I was with Dr. Hays, she challenged the way I had previously been taught and set me up for success in the nursing program. By using case studies, she taught me how to focus on the important sections to find the root question. Application style questions were, by far, the most helpful as the nursing program uses primarily that format. I had never encountered that before and do not think I would have been successful without learning how to answer questions in that style. The topics taught this way stick. I am grateful every day that Dr. Hays

was my first college class experience; I may have chosen to not continue my path without her." – Mellissa Crossman Pumphrey, ASN DSC '17, RN Advent Health Gordon

"As an associate professor of nursing, I can attest to the effectiveness of Dr. Kim Hays' teaching strategies to enhance student learning. Nursing students must recall information learned in the study of A&P in order to apply that knowledge to new and different situations involving disease. Rather than simply asking students to regurgitate information, Dr. Hays tests their ability to apply their knowledge. This ability is critical in understanding how medical interventions restore or mimic normal physiology. Furthermore, evidence demonstrates that nursing students tend to be social learners. Dr. Hays engages with students in a way that connects them to each other and to the content. She invests in her relationship with students. Notably, she is the only faculty member outside of the department of nursing who consistently attends the memorable ceremony in which her former biology students receive their professional nursing pins. Dr. Hays' contribution to nursing students' success is greatly appreciated." – Deb Richardson, MSN, EdD, RN, Assoc. Prof. Nursing, Dalton State College

Make the Outdoors Your Classroom

The beautiful part of teaching Field Biology Techniques is that our classroom is literally right outside our doors. My goal in this course to give students hands-on experiences in the very ecosystems they are learning about in textbooks. This takes planning and flexibility that often involves pushing students out of their comfort zones, but the end result is often some of the most meaningful learning experiences a student has. Field Biology Techniques is built completely around hands-on, experiential learning. For the entire term, we make the world our classroom and students are involved in activities like aquatic and terrestrial habitat analysis, aquatic and terrestrial invertebrate sampling, small mammal trapping, mist netting for birds, electrofishing and seining for fish, native plant surveys, an field trips in collaboration with another USG school to explore different ecoregions in Georgia. These skills along with the preparation of field notes and data sheets give students real, practical experience that make them ideal candidates for graduate school, research fellowships, and employment.

Unsolicited student comments about Field Biology Techniques: "Thank you Dr. Hays for getting me interested in field research. I feel I really grew as a biologist in this class. I believe even people who aren't bio majors should take this class because it truly helps you get an understanding of how complex and amazing nature is!" –BIOL 3700, Summer 2016

"I really feel that I learned some very useful and practical techniques that are just not possible from a lecture course." – BIOL 3700 student, Summer 2018

"I love going outdoors and doing it! It was the first class I got to get out of the classroom and explore." – BIOL 3700 student, Summer 2019

Solicited student comment: "My experiences in Dr. Hays's field techniques class have taught me aspects of fieldwork and writing that remain the keystone of my personal and professional processes to this day. Specifically, Dr. Hays instructed our class on how to effectively record field notes that we later used when referencing conditions surrounding certain events in the field. As an avid outdoorsman and self-proclaimed conservationist, I use these techniques years later the same as I did when I was under Dr. Hays's instruction. Dr. Hays's impact on her students is such that after six years since taking her classes, I often think back to the ways her teaching strategies changed the course of my successes as an outdoorsman, passion as an environmental worker, and loyalty to the cause of conservation. Thanks to Dr. Hays, I have gained strategies and techniques that will not only stay with me for years to come, but also be passed down to those who come after me." – Jacob Southern, BS Biology '14, Health & Safety Specialist, Dalton Utilities

Criteria 3 – Strong Commitment to Fostering Academic Success Outside the Classroom

Some of the most meaningful learning experiences don't often occur in the classroom or lab; they happen in an experiential learning mentorship, an advising meeting, in a workshop, or even in a chance encounter. My goal in working with students is always to meet them where they are in order to get them where they want to be. This work doesn't always fit within a class session and must be based on relationship building. Building meaningful relationships with my students is one of the most meaningful and motivating parts of my job.

Student Professional Development

One of the challenges of a first-generation college student is preparing for the transition away from college and into the professional workforce. In order to expose students to opportunities like professional school and the realities of the job market, I worked as co-chair of the Undergraduate Research Committee and chair of the Student Development committee to organize events that expose students to educational and career options, help them forge connections with DSC alumni, and help prepare them for the realities of the job market. Additionally, I incorporate assignments into the Senior Seminar in Biology class that encourage students to begin their professional development preparations.

- DSC STEM Career Panel: This event is held in a speed dating format that allows students to move around the room and meet with individuals, many of them DSC STEM alumni, working in a variety of professions. Average attendance at this event is 90-120 students.
- DSC Graduate School Panel: This event is held in a panel format and includes DSC alumni who have moved on to graduate programs. This moderated panel gives students the opportunity to learn what graduate school is, how to pay for it, and what to consider when choosing a program. Average attendance at this event is 90-120 students.
- CV Workshops: This event is a small meeting to introduce students to curricula vitae early in their academic career, provide tips and examples, and answer questions. Average attendance at this event is 10-15 students.

Student comments: "I thoroughly enjoyed getting exposure to the other pathways I have not heard about!"

“The diverse panelists were a great group. I learned a lot from this event, and I would like to have these events continue to help inform other students about their options with their science degrees.”

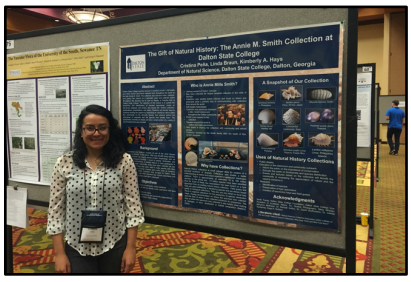
“Honestly, the event was a great success and very intriguing! Absolutely loved it, thank you for the opportunity.”

Experiential Learning Mentorship

Students at DSC have the opportunity to work with faculty members to complete Independent Readings, Research, and Service Learning projects. In each of these relationships, students and I develop individual contracts outlining their goals and products for the semester. These mentorship opportunities allow students to explore a topic, experience, or project while receiving one-on-one mentorship. I have mentored 11 students conducting Independent Readings, 7 students conducting research projects, and 22 students earning Service Learning in Biology credit as undergraduate teaching assistants, curatorial assistants, or for external internships. Readings students completed literature reviews, research proposals, or lesson plans specifically selected to align with their career goals. Examples include:

- “Pedigree Dogs: Genetic Issues” – Megan Preston, Lincoln Memorial College of Veterinary Medicine, Class of 2021
- “Hellbender Population Decline in the SE US” – Amber Young, MS student, Auburn University Department of Wildlife and Fisheries
- "A Comparison of Synthetic and Natural Tick Repellant Products on Three Common Species of Ticks" – Madison Bodnar, Account Executive, NeuroNexus
- “Effects of Antibiotic Use on Gut Flora” – Fabiola Lopez, MS applicant, University of Georgia Department of Ecology

Research students performed independent research including experimental design, data collection and analysis, and data presentation. All research students were required to present their research in some conference of symposium setting. Examples include:



- “The Effects of Anthropogenic Disturbance on Small Mammal Diversity” – MaryAnn Taylor, MS Student, College of Charleston Department of Marine Biology
- “Antimicrobial Properties of Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) Essential Oil” – Tori Roy, Public Health Program Assoc., Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University
- “Small Mammal Survey of Dalton State College” – Mackenzie Mathis, Animal Specialist, Tennessee Aquarium
- “The Gift of Natural History: The Annie M. Smith Collection at Dalton State College” – Linda Braun (MS Student Kennesaw State University) & Cristina Pena (IT Support, Shaw Industries)
- “Bedding Preferences in Lab-based Dermestid Beetle Colonies” – Carol Chadwick, Medical Lab Technologist, Hamilton Medical Center

Service Learning students can serve several roles: undergraduate teaching assistant, curatorial assistant, or external intern. Examples include:

- Julie Miller-Moody, Physician Assistant, Harbin Clinic Family Medicine
- Kenneth Slaton, Environmental Health and Safety Coordinator, Cargill Inc.
- Moriah Ackerman, Medical Lab Technologist, CHI Memorial
- Nicole McDaniel, PA Student ’23, Lincoln-Memorial University
- Samantha Vazquez, Chiropractic Assistant
- Christelle Ryniker, Patient Care Assistant, PA School applicant
- Austin Denny, Junior Developer, Varsity Hype

Student Reflections: “Readings in Biology benefited me because I feel more confident about reading peer-reviewed literature. I learned to dissect and take my time to understand papers in my classes, but this semester I had to put those skills to the test.”

“Dr. Hays is aware that long-term I would like to work in education, and she gave me several opportunities to gain extra experience during my time with her such as offering review sessions or assisting with the lecture portion of the class. This has been an inclusive and enriching position full of surprises and new experiences that will make me more employable after graduation.” – Undergraduate TA in BIOL 1108K

“As I was teaching students new material this semester, and listening to them discuss the topics together, I am reminded of the excitement that comes with figuring out complex topics.” – Undergraduate TA in BIOL 2213K

The experience of the mentor-mentee relationship extends far beyond the data and the conferences. Many of these relationships have continued far beyond the students’ time at DSC and are far more important than the research experience. Students comment: “The four years prior to meeting Dr. Hays I had just experienced the most difficult trials of my life. I believe that her mentoring is primarily what shaped me into who I am today. She wasn't just my professor and research adviser; she was the person in my life that built me up both professionally and personally at a time that I was the most vulnerable. When I met Dr. Hays, I was timid, shy, and insecure. By the time I presented my research at my 2nd conference, I felt like a confident young professional.” – MaryAnn Taylor, BS Biology ’16, MS College of Charleston ‘21

“Dr. Kimberly Hays is an exceptional mentor and educator and has fostered academic excellence for me and other students both in and out of the classroom. Dr. Hays was my research mentor during my time at Dalton State College and spent countless hours aiding my growth and improvement as a researcher, presenter and academic with personal attention and genuine interest in my success. Dr. Hays always went above and beyond what was expected of her in her role and research advisor and mentor, helping me with any task and encouraging my continued growth as a researcher whether she was ‘on the clock’ or not. Her attention and genuine interest in me have set me up for continued success in my academic career and provided a strong basis for my continued development through my graduate career. – Tori Roy, BS Biology ’15, MPH Benedictine University ‘19