

March 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Dear Award Selection Committee,

It is with pleasure that I write this letter of support for Adriana Thomas for the 2025 AP Contribution Award. I have known Adriana since summer 2021 when she joined the Department of Human Development on the Vancouver campus as an academic advisor. I have had numerous opportunities to work with her closely and observe her work, first as a colleague, and in the last three years as an Academic Director. I know firsthand that Adriana has made positive impacts on not only Human Development (HD) students, but also prospective students, faculty, and the overall campus community.

Adriana takes a very personal approach to each student, creating rapport and provides individualized support to help them successfully navigate their academic journey. For example, to assist students with planning, she develops an individualized advising/coursework plan for each student, which greatly helps improve the students' understanding of progress towards their degree. Individualized advising is critical for retention of diverse students. Many students in the field of Human Development are considered non-traditional due to their age, race/ethnicity, LGBTQ+ and immigration statuses, family background, and other factors. Furthermore, many are first-generation college students who face multiple challenges such as financial burden, lack of family support, and inequitable access to resources due to lower familiarity with the higher education system. Adriana understands that effective advising does not simply involve the passing on of information but, rather, requires a recognition that all students come from diverse backgrounds that inform their cultural practices, beliefs, behaviors, and expectations. Adriana does not make assumptions about what students already know about the university, treats each student as a unique individual, and creates an environment that is welcoming and inclusive. This is particularly important for the Vancouver campus where the percentage of students identifying as students of color has steadily increased from 14% in 2009 to more than 30% in 2024.

Adriana is highly organized and efficient. Since arriving in our department, she has significantly improved the unit's student files and advising processes. As lead advisor, she created new advising materials to enable the unit's advising team to communicate more effectively with each other, initiated tracking procedures to more effectively monitor track students' degree progress, and connected with other on-campus advising support to

ensure smooth transition from first-year advising to the unit's advising. In addition, Adriana ensures that students have maximum access to her by using online scheduling (remote and live, according to preference) and by reaching out directly to students who fail to contact her for their routine pre-registration advising appointment. Adriana contacts students post-advising to ensure they have registered and to help them problem-solve. She also routinely contacts at-risk students to discuss and offer appropriate support. In short, Adriana strives through her student outreach efforts to ensure that no student slips through the cracks, which is critical for the success of our students.

Since the 2019 academic year, the Vancouver campus has been experiencing a decline in student enrollment. While this is true across all WSU campuses (and is also a national trend), the rate of decline has been particularly significant for the Vancouver HD unit. Adriana considers recruitment and outreach as an important part of her responsibilities. Upon arriving in our unit, she immediately connected with Student Affairs and attends all scheduled recruitment activities. She regularly shares ideas on how to improve our unit's visibility at on- and off-campus (e.g., regional 2-year college) recruitment events – and we have subsequently updated brochures and obtained other items for recruitment events. Adriana worked with unit leadership and marketing staff to update our website to clarify HD's new degree options, which has been critical in recruitment and outreach. Yet another creative strategy Adriana employs to recruit students is to analyze student data using OBIEE. Based on such analysis, Adriana identifies and reaches out to students who have taken a few HD courses and, thus, are close to but have not sought to obtain certificates and/or to claim HD as a minor. The following comment from one such student, who happens to be a math major, is an example of the fruit of her efforts:

*I have a passion for human development; however, I chose to complete a math degree due to higher paying job opportunities after graduation. I am currently in my junior year of my math degree at WSUV and I'm realizing that I have little interest in the actual degree or subject. I would love to pursue a degree that I am passionate about. I have taken several human development courses during my time at WSUV and I absolutely loved them! (Fall 2022)*

I believe Adriana's wide-ranging activities are highly impactful to students, faculty, and the overall campus atmosphere. In fact, one HD undergraduate student has expressed a desire to become an active, equity-minded college advisor like Adriana after graduation and has requested to "shadow" Adriana as an intern in Fall 2023. I believe Adriana would be a great mentor and will contribute to nurturing the next generation of skilled advisors.

In summary, I believe Adriana deserves full consideration for the 2025 AP Contribution Award. If you have any questions or need further information about my recommendation, please do not hesitate to contact me at [yoshie\\_sano@wsu.edu](mailto:yoshie_sano@wsu.edu).

Sincerely,

*Yoshie Sano*

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March 30, 2025

Dear Selection Committee,

I am honored to write this letter in enthusiastic support of Adriana Thomas for the Administrative Professional Contribution Award. As both a student advised by Adriana and an intern under her supervision, I have had the privilege of witnessing firsthand her unwavering dedication, mentorship, and commitment to student success at Washington State University Vancouver.

Adriana is more than an academic advisory—she is an ally in the fight to succeed. Her guidance has been instrumental in helping me (and many others) navigate the complexities of the University experience, as well as the vagaries of professional development, career planning, and internships. She takes the time to understand each student's unique goals, barriers and challenges, and then provides personalized support and direction. Her ability to inspire confidence, foster growth, and create opportunities for students is truly remarkable.

During my internship under Adriana's supervision, she directed me in ways to help encourage my own leadership development, and she was highly supportive of my novel choice in internship sites. The internship preparation course she taught gave me many practical tools that I have since been utilizing, and she has provided constructive feedback that has helped me develop the professional skills necessary for my future career. Her mentorship extended beyond the internship itself—she continually has made herself available to me, offered valuable insights, and provided guidance that has had a lasting impact on my academic and professional journey.

Adriana's contributions to WSU Vancouver extend far beyond her job description. She cultivates a supportive and empowering learning environment, consistently going above and beyond to ensure that students are well-prepared for success. Her dedication, passion, and tireless efforts to enrich the student experience make her an outstanding candidate for this award.

I wholeheartedly support Adriana Thomas for the AP Contribution Award and strongly believe that her hard work, leadership, and commitment to student success deserve to be recognized. Please feel free to contact me if you require any further information regarding my endorsement.

Sincerely,

Steven Robinson  
WSU Student  
steven.robinson@wsu.edu  
360.772.3539

Dear AP Contribution Award Committee,

I am writing to support Adriana Thomas for the 2025 AP Contribution Award. As a former student who has truly benefited from her help, I can personally speak to the positive impact she has had during my time at Washington State University.

Adriana Thomas has been an amazing resource for me and many other students. As my advisor, she kept in regular contact, making sure my course schedule was on track so I could graduate on time. As my teacher in an internship prep course, she helped me find internship opportunities that were a great fit for my career goals. She did not just help me find these opportunities, she also took the time to offer advice, answer all my questions, and make sure I felt prepared every step of the way.

She genuinely cares and listens to her students' needs. I always felt supported and encouraged, and I know I am not the only one who feels that way. She always goes above and beyond to ensure we have the best chance for success. Even after graduating, I continue to feel comfortable reaching out to her with any questions.

Thank you for considering Adriana Thomas for the AP Contribution Award. I am very grateful for everything she has done for me, and I know she has made a positive impact on so many other students as well.

Sincerely,

Pamela Schaffner



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April 2, 2025

To the AP Contribution Award nomination review committee,

I write to nominate **Adriana Thomas** from the WSU Vancouver campus for this important system-wide award. As a member of the Department of Human Development (HD) advising and teaching teams, Adriana's work has been critical to supporting undergraduate students and for living out our HD Values of integrity, effectiveness, inclusion, collaboration, growth & innovation, and fun! (Yes, our HD Values include an exclamation point after fun!) In this letter I will focus on Adriana's collaboration, growth & innovation, and fun, as these factors align with contributions to be showcased by winners of this award. Through this letter, I hope you can clearly see how Adriana is deserving of the AP Contribution Award.

#### Collaboration

Adriana is one of the most collaborative colleagues with whom I work. We 1) are co-chairs of the Human Development Internships Committee, 2) meet every two weeks for collaborative working sessions to advance our shared projects, 3) wrote and finalized the Washington State University Department of Human Development Internship Handbook, 4) revamped our *HD 497 Professional Preparation Seminar* and *HD 498 Internship in Human Development* assignments to highlight National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) career readiness competencies and follow a transparent assignment design structure, 5) developed and delivered a presentation at the Student Success & Retention Conference in Portland, Oregon in February 2025, 6) developed and presented a poster at the WSU Academic Showcase in Pullman in March 2025, and 7) met in summers 2023 and 2024 for self-initiated HD internship coordinators retreats in Vancouver and Spokane, respectively. All of this has taken place in less than three years and primarily via Zoom, as we are on different WSU campuses. This advancement of our work would not have been possible without Adriana's collaborative approach to working on and completing projects that are of service to HD students.

The partnership we have developed is one of mutual respect and support. We focus our attention on problems that need to be solved and take it upon ourselves to create the solutions to these problems. I believe the best example of this problem solving is the creation of the WSU HD Internship Handbook. Through conversation, Adriana and I noticed that our predecessors communicated HD internship requirements through a mix of documentation and institutional memory. But with each semester bringing a new group of students, we wanted to develop a one-stop-shop for all students, internship mentor(s), and faculty and staff in the Department of Human Development, to have all their questions about the internship answered. After an academic year of bi-weekly meetings and sharing the Handbook draft with colleagues and



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students for review, we finalized a document that has become a valuable resource for all parties involved in this important curricular experience. Adriana was a proactive, detailed, and thoughtful partner in this work.

### Growth & Innovation

In addition to her innovative approach to developing the WSU HD Internship Handbook, Adriana is committed to the growth of students, the WSU HD program, and herself.

For students, Adriana is committed to the belief that education and the HD internship can help our students flourish. She always thinks about the students and has shared how they are her favorite part of the job. She anticipates their needs, responds to their concerns, and celebrates their accomplishments.

For the HD program, Adriana is sought out to serve on several committees due to her expertise and reputation for contributing to the group. Notably, Adriana has been central to the undergraduate student recruitment efforts on the WSU Vancouver campus. She has presented at a number of on- and off-campus events, responds with urgency to all prospective student inquiries (even last week she told me that she will not let 24 hours go by without responding to a prospective student), and designs and orders swag that helps students show off their HD pride.

For herself, Adriana is focused on self-improvement. She is committed to growing as a professional by taking on various certifications and presenting at professional conferences, even when the expense comes out of her own pocket. In fact, just last week she traveled to the Pullman campus to present at WSU Academic Showcase with me, all out of pocket. Adriana understands how this growth is for the benefit of students, which is why she goes out of her way to learn and grow.

### Fun!

Adriana is a joy to be around. She is passionate, committed to our shared work, incredibly kind, and welcoming to all. Over the past three years, our working relationship has developed into a working friendship, where we share meals together at conferences, send each other birthday and holiday cards, and care for the other's wellbeing inside and outside of work. A great example of our positive working relationship is when she kindly invited me to her family's cabin just north of Spokane for our summer 2024 self-initiated retreat. I was incredibly grateful to be a part of her precious vacation with family. Over the 24+ hours I was with her, we finalized the WSU HD Internship Handbook and discussed our goals for the next academic year (which resulted in the conference and poster presentations). Then when our work was done, we swam in the lake, went



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fishing, and shared delicious homemade meals over friendly conversation. I felt so welcomed to be invited into Adriana's world and to meet her wonderful family.

Adriana is an important part of my work at WSU. She helps me address problems and come up with actionable solutions. She nudges me to share my work with external audiences. She is incredibly reliable and responsive to all communication and plans we make to advance our projects. She is a friend who makes my life and work at WSU better.

I hope this letter helps you see how Adriana's contributions at WSU are worthy of this important award. I have been keeping my eye on the AP Contribution Award nomination period for months because I am committed to sharing my perspective on what makes Adriana such an asset to our collective work at WSU. Thank you for reading my words and considering this nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katie Forsythe".

Katie Forsythe, M.A.

Assistant Professor | Washington State University Department of Human Development  
2021 AP Contribution Award winner