Nomination for Craig Werth for the Marian Belgrave-Howard Award

It is with the greatest pleasure that I submit this nomination of Craig Werth for the Marian Belgrave-Howard Award in recognition of his outstanding contributions to the New England Educational Opportunity Association (NEOA).

Background:

Craig Werth has demonstrated unwavering dedication and leadership throughout his tenure at the University of New Hampshire's Student Support Services and as a valued member of the NEOA board. His commitment to advancing the mission of NEOA and promoting equal educational opportunities embodies the principles championed by Marian Belgrave-Howard, the inaugural president of NEAEOPP.

Personal Experience:

I first had the privilege of working with Craig on the NEOA Board in the early 1990s. Over the years, Craig has served on several NEOA Board of Directors in various capacities. I fondly recall after-dinner conversations and the moments when he would share his musical talent, breaking out his guitar and engaging us all through song and conversation. His ability to connect with others on a personal level made him a treasured part of these gatherings, fostering camaraderie and inspiration among his peers.

Contributions:

• Leadership in the NEOA Leadership Institute:

- Craig played a pivotal role in the formation of the NEOA Leadership Institute. While I would need to verify details with him or consult our records, I believe this initiative began under Tom Putnam’s presidency, with Craig chairing the committee tasked with convening past presidents to explore its establishment.

- After retiring, Craig was called upon to direct the Institute, and he graciously accepted. Though he likely anticipated this role to be temporary, his exceptional leadership led to him being invited back repeatedly. I was honored to participate in his first class of participants. The program was eventually renamed the Arnold Mitchem Leadership Institute (AMLI).

- Craig’s vision and dedication to the program have left a lasting impact. Graduates of AMLI have gone on to serve in NEOA board positions, including as presidents, and have assumed leadership roles within TRIO programs and institutions nationwide.

• Advocacy for Educational Equity:

Craig has been a tireless advocate for expanding equal educational opportunities, working to dismantle barriers for students from underrepresented backgrounds.

• Mentorship and Inspiration:

Through mentorship and genuine dedication, Craig has inspired countless professionals and students, fostering growth and leadership within the TRIO and educational opportunity communities.

Impact:

Craig Werth’s contributions have advanced NEOA’s mission and transformed lives. His work has empowered individuals to overcome challenges, achieve their aspirations, and take on leadership roles that perpetuate the mission of expanding educational equity.

Conclusion:

Craig’s unwavering dedication, pure-hearted commitment, and significant contributions to NEOA and TRIO professionals are unparalleled. I am deeply honored to nominate him for the Marian Belgrave-Howard Award.

Craig’s leadership, advocacy, and passion leave a lasting legacy. This year especially, he embodies the very essence of our theme. His work in the 1990s as a TRIO practitioner and board member reflects our history as we look in the “mirror”, while his leadership with AMLI opens “windows” of opportunity for many to bring NEOA into the future with strength and unity.

His inspiring contributions align perfectly with the spirit of this award, and I wholeheartedly believe he is most deserving of this esteemed recognition.

Submitted by Stephanie Cruz