

The Faculty Excellence Award in Mentoring was established by a gift from Tom Carlson, Professor of Biology and honors Professor Emeritus of Biology Art Gee who excelled as a mentor to colleagues and students in his many years of service on the faculty. This award recognizes the efforts of a faculty member who serves as a “personal or professional guide” to students or colleagues and who makes a profound differences in the lives of others as a role model, confidant, critic or co-learner. This year we honor:

Ksenija Simic-Muller, Associate Professor of Mathematics

Professor Simic-Muller recognizes that mentoring for careers happens most effectively when it happens alongside mentoring the whole person. One student wrote “She knows that we are more than just students--that we are friends, siblings, sons and daughters. I came to Ksenija with concerns about my family or relationships with friends and she would always listen, regardless of how absurd I probably sounded.” Another student described Ksenija as having “a gift for intuitively understanding how people feel,” noting that “she uses that gift to take care of students.” The same student wrote, “I cannot count the number of occasions when Ksenija reminded me to breathe, take care of myself, and give myself some grace. She is patient, empathetic and caring.”

As a mentor to future math educators, Ksenija models to her students how they might one day interact with their own students. In speaking to her role-modeling, a student wrote “Ksenija made me realize that being a teacher isn’t just about teaching a concept, but about making connections with students, building trust, and helping them see their own potential. Ksenija did that for me. Now it’s my turn to do that for others.” Similarly, another student shared that Professor Simic-Muller “has given me tools that I can use far beyond my own classroom, and wisdom I hope to impart on my own students.”

Students describe Professor Simic-Muller as a partner in planning their future as math educators. In describing her mentorship, one student wrote, “My academic focus has been shaped by Ksenija’s commitment to asking deeper questions and her willingness to dedicate time to exploring new ideas.” She teaches math educator students that they need to fully know each of their students, a lesson she practices herself.

For her excellent mentorship, we offer our congratulations to Ksenija Simic-Muller.