

The University of Alabama Alumni Association
2016 Outstanding Commitment to Teaching Awards
Professor Allison Hetzel

Professor Allison Hetzel was the first UATD faculty member I met when touring UA as a high school sophomore, when I was first introduced to her warmth and kindness as a teacher (as a point of reference, I can't recall who I met with in the English or Spanish departments). Allison induces a sense of calm in her students through her work, her person, in everything from the decoration of her office. Ours is not a calming field – in Theatre emotions and tensions often run very high, and as such it is difficult to keep ourselves in check not only mentally, but often physically. Allison is concerned with both, through her Fitzmaurice work and in her capacity as a fellow artist concerned with our wellbeing. While Theatre students tend to focus only on the work and on doing whatever we need to do to get it performance-ready, Allison is there reminding us to take care of ourselves – get enough sleep, take vitamins, drink tea, don't neglect your body or your mental health. As basic as these things may seem, they frequently fall by the wayside during the run of a show, and we often need those reminders more than we realize.

In the past, I have had several unfortunate experiences with academic advising, and knowing how often students leave these appointments more confused or with a schedule they don't really want or understand makes Allison's work in this area all the more valuable. She takes the time to really work with students instead of merely checking off boxes of requirements, and is happy and ready to advise in the areas we really need, whether that's advice on changing majors or minors, professional advice, or life in general. Too often academic advisors seem uninterested or too rushed to spend time on the kind of advising students really need; Allison is not one of their number.

Through Allison's classes I have learned valuable styles, working on Greek tragedy in period-appropriate form, in archetype workshops, and in accents and dialects – most of which are now included on my resume. These are skills and experiences that will set me apart as I prepare to graduate and begin auditioning in earnest, and everything we've worked on puts me one step closer to my ultimate goal of being cast.

In the Theatre department teacher-student relationships have the ability to grow much stronger than in other fields by virtue of working together as castmates on stage and creating art together. Both onstage and in the classroom, Allison has helped me grow both as an artist and as a person over the last four years, and has proved a force for good in the department, spending time with students who feel overlooked and taking care to make sure we are taking care of ourselves. She has continued to show genuine interest in my well-being since the beginning, in both difficult times and good, and her teaching has given me valuable tools for use in the real world.

For all these and more, I hope you will consider her a strong candidate for the Outstanding Commitment to Teaching Award.

Best,

Elizabeth Perkinson