

My earliest memory of this year's Apperson Award recipient was a visit to a school counseling office when I was an admissions officer at the University of Delaware.

That office had somewhat mismatched furniture (the sort that advertisements like to call "gently used" furniture and what a famous Victorian novel called "Shabby Genteel"). It was comprised mostly of comfy couches and chairs – and rugs that must have seemed very inviting to students who were more inclined to sit on the floor. It was unusually colorful and decorated by someone who had a keen eye for making things visually exciting. But what I mostly remember is how "warm" and "inviting" the place looked and felt. It was unlike any other administrative office I had ever seen.

The counselor who greeted me was as warm and welcoming as the room. As the kids poured in, they were greeted by name and introduced to me one by one. They seemed to treat the room as a kind of second home. That impressed me.

Later that fall applications from this high school started arriving at our admissions office. Then and over the many years to follow I had the privilege of reading scores of this school's applications to the University of Delaware. No two letters from this college counselor were alike for the very good reason that this year's Apperson recipient never viewed any two students as being "alike."

Since I'm retired and can now say whatever I want, I cannot resist adding what a contrast our Apperson recipient's letters were with the letters we got from a rival high school. The rival's letters were generally four pages long, the first three of which were filled with brag points about their school; only on page 4 did we finally learn something about the candidate. Our Apperson recipient, on the other hand, produced letters that were miracles of concise and honest descriptions of each students' talents and potential.

The individuality and specialness of each student came alive in these letters. When I subsequently met any of these students in person, as I often did, the student I met matched the person I had already read about in my colleague's letters. This year's Apperson recipient always nailed it astutely.

Our email exchanges over the years and our many, many phone conversations could stand as a record of two colleagues sharing the joys and sorrows of the teenagers we would eventually share between our two institutions.

Sometimes, they recorded the vicissitudes of teenage life. In one memorable exchange our Apperson recipient told me about a student who was dying to enroll in Delaware's Honors College. Well, we admitted the student to Honors, and, as our Apperson recipient predicted, the student immediately deposited – well before May 1. On May 1, however, my colleague told me that the student had suddenly changed his mind, was withdrawing from Delaware, and had just sent a deposit elsewhere. So I dutifully cancelled his admission and put through the paperwork to refund his Delaware deposit. On May 2nd, however, the counselor and I had another exchange. The parent had called to report that their son was experiencing a panicky meltdown and had just decided that he wanted Delaware after all. I dutifully reinstated his admission, and I recall that our Apperson recipient and I had a good laugh about how much our daily work was rooted in the insecurities of teenagers.

I am proud that our Apperson recipient also has a keen eye for the ethical concerns that guide – or, at least, *ought to* guide – our profession. During the years when I chaired NACAC's Admission Practices Committee, school counselors would often post on Facebook's *College Admissions Counselor* group site troubling stories about how a college's admissions policies were unfairly affecting their students. Many of their worries raised serious ethical concerns. I would know about them because our Apperson recipient would unfailingly type my name into the "comment box." To Facebook that meant sending me a notice that I had been "mentioned" in a comment, and that is what alerted me to the issue and the need to follow up.

Our Apperson recipient is also notable for having an encyclopedic knowledge of American colleges and universities. Ask for the names of colleges that offer some of higher education's most arcane majors or an activity or sport that is rarely represented on campus or ask for the names of colleges that will serve a student with a particular special need, and our colleague will know what to recommend.

As many of us in this room will know, our Apperson recipient's generosity of spirit extends not only to students, but also to our college admissions colleagues, especially the rookies among us. Even in those days *before* cell phones and online Google maps, our colleague shared recommendations, driving times, and directions to nearby high schools with the college reps who made appointments to visit her school.

But there is more. Her school is admittedly what we call a "well-resourced" high school. During the pandemic, when colleges were setting up virtual visits to her school, she added this note:

"While you're 'visiting' the Delaware area virtually, we'd like to encourage you to also schedule virtual visits with two other schools/organizations that work with amazing, underrepresented students and would welcome connecting with you!"

She followed this with their contact names and web addresses. Indeed, within Potomac & Chesapeake she has been one of our most passionate voices on behalf of inclusion, equity, and diversity whether we are talking about our Summer Institutes, where she has been a mainstay, or her Potomac & Chesapeake committee service.

Our Apperson recipient works at a Quaker high school, and while (frankly) I do not often take much heed of mission statements, I am moved by Quaker values. This is what her school has to say about itself in its mission statement. I quote it because I believe it describes our Apperson recipient to a tee:

“ . . . diversity is integral to our educational objectives and to our mission as a Quaker school. The defining belief of Quakerism is that there is “that of God” in everyone. That belief gives rise to a profound respect for the dignity of each person and an obligation to lead on issues of social justice. Guided by Quaker principles, we seek to build and sustain a community of students, families, faculty, staff, administrators and trustees with a variety of identities—in terms of culture, economic means, ethnicity, gender, nationality, race, religion and sexual orientation.”

The school is the Wilmington Friends School, and our Apperson recipient is, of course, Kathleen Martin, their fabulous director of college guidance.

Finally, there is this too: whenever a colleague has shared a concern in their personal lives – an illness, perhaps, or the loss of a friend or relative – Kathleen Martin often responds with that beautifully moving, Quakerly phrase, “I will hold you in the light.”

I think Kathleen holds all of us in the light, and most especially the students at Wilmington Friends who have benefited from her wisdom, her knowledge, her compassion, her ethical values, her humor, and her abiding love. While we honor Kathleen Martin tonight, for many years Kathleen has honored Potomac & Chesapeake with her presence.

The Richard L. Apperson Award is Potomac & Chesapeake’s profoundest Thank-You for service. Kathleen Martin, you so richly deserve it. Congratulations, my friend!

April 2, 2023 at the NACAC Conference at the Hyatt Regency Chesapeake Bay in Cambridge, MD