

In the spirit of Jack Blackburn, Kevin Terry has paved the way for access to higher education free of financial barriers for thousands of underrepresented and low-income high school students in Loudoun County Virginia. He has been doing this quietly since the early 1990's, and his mission has followed him from Broad Run High School to Potomac Falls High School, Farmwell Station Middle School, Dominion High School and Rock Ridge High School. Kevin is calm, logical, kind, wicked-smart, and has always been focused on a mission of creating opportunity for students.

Kevin, who is the School Counseling Director at Rock Ridge High School, has always focused on creating a college going culture, particularly for our most underrepresented students. In 2015, Kevin was continuing to question the barrier of cost that was preventing under-served and economically disadvantaged students from enrolling in DE courses through the local community college. While dual enrollment options had been available for many years, existing programs required parents to pay tuition up front and receive reimbursement later, thus precluding participation among low-income students and reducing participation.

Unable to budge the policy at our local community college, Kevin worked tirelessly with Richard Bland College, which was willing to waive the cost of dual enrollment tuition. Despite some pushback from the Commonwealth, Kevin remained as committed to this form of social justice as anyone I have known. Beginning with a group of about 70 students and 6 courses, Rock Ridge High School partnered with Richard Bland College to offer dual enrollment courses at no cost to the students and their families. Rock Ridge teachers became certified to teach the college level course on campus. Kevin quietly earned the support of members of the Virginia legislature, as well as Sen. Mark Warner, who invited Kevin and several of his students to share their dual enrollment success story on a panel on Capitol Hill in summer 2015. Today, Rock Ridge offers 16 dual enrollment courses, with 84% of the Class of 2023 graduating with dual enrollment credits. In the last 5 years those credits earned equate to over \$12 million saved in tuition. In large part due to Kevin's efforts, Virginia's largest community college announced in August 2015 that they would no longer charge tuition to the students who take dual-enrollment courses at high schools throughout Northern Virginia each year.

More programs followed these traditional courses, as Kevin was looking for something that worked for both college bound students and those who were college unsure. With the ongoing support of his principal, Mr. John Duellman, and in collaboration with an amazing theater arts teacher, they built a nationally recognized cluster of three dual-enrollment courses in theater history, literature and performance.

Students at Rock Ridge can add NOCTI (National Occupational Competency Testing Institute) certifications in 17 areas including the Arts, business, health science, STEM. The first students received NOCTI certifications in theatre arts in 2015 and have been followed by an increasing number of students each year. NOCTI certifications enable students to launch careers immediately after high school graduation while still including 2- and 4-year college studies in their long-range career plans. Students are also able to include these skills and certifications on their college applications.

RRH students also have the opportunity to participate in the Virginia FAME program – the VA Federation for Advanced Manufacturing Education), which partners students with industry while they take classes at select community colleges. The goal is for students to gain valuable employment experience with manufacturing leaders while also completing their associate degrees.

These are just a few of the examples of the doors that Kevin has quietly opened for these students and their families for more than three decades. His sustained active involvement in the profession, and dedication to promoting equal access to higher education has been particularly focused on those who are often lost between the cracks. Of all of our members, I believe that he has been the most consistent to outreach to our legislators and visits to the Hill in Richmond and in DC. His vision includes a wide range of post-secondary education options for students at all levels of academic standing while providing employment skills for those who will need to work their way through college while supporting family members.

I consider Kevin to be a mentor, a colleague, and a friend. He enriched my life by being there on my first day as a public-school counselor in August 1995, and remaining in my life in the years that have passed. It has been my privilege to know his wife Andrea (who is also an educator), and their daughter Afton, who are with us tonight. Their son Ethan is finishing his freshman year in college and is consumed in exams this week, otherwise he would be here as well. If Kevin's extended family were here, you would meet a brother and sister whose life's work is also embedded in service to others.

Kevin is far too humble and focused on his work to think about his legacy, so I would like to remind him today that there are thousands of students whose lives you have touched by providing them with a more robust pathway to opportunity and success, and colleagues who you have inspired to action by witnessing your many contributions to the greater good. I can only imagine Jack Blackburn's joy in seeing one of his admitted students following in his footsteps in creating opportunity and access to

higher education.

Please join me in recognizing my friend and colleague Kevin Terry, one of the people I most admire in the world, for his selection as the 20204 recipient of the Jack Blackburn Award.