



Student Employee of the Year 2025 Nomination Letter

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Nominator

Amy Soto

Nominee

Berkeley Perschon
University Advisement Center
Peer Mentor

Communication

As an Exploration Specialist, Berkeley Perschon works with many students, professional advisors, faculty, and campus partners across campus in various capacities and uses her highly cultivated communication skills to convey her message clearly and concisely. Observing her skills, I could see she could be trusted to represent our office with full confidence as she speaks with clarity and grace and is incredibly well-spoken. She has spoken to over 2500 students and professionals in a variety of high-impact settings to full-time advisors (over 100 full-time advisors), first-year experience mentors (130 participants yearly), visiting high school students (480 MSS SOAR HS Junior participants), NSO events (30-200 attendees), booth opportunities (250-300 visitors each time each time), and visiting guests from other campuses as needed. Not only does Berkeley prepare while on shift, she cares about it so much that she's said on occasion that she practices walking to and from class and while she is in the shower.

As a gifted communicator, she has helped our team to increase our outreach efforts by overseeing our class presentation projects for the past 18 months. She had led out on updating the workflow communication plan to reach out to advisors and professors to help them request a team member to visit their class to present on our offerings. While this effort is simple, Berkeley's dedicated effort has transformed the specific messaging that we use so that they are written in a style that creates need, illustrates value, and streamlines details so it's easier to read. In addition to this, she has also worked tirelessly to align our presentation materials to help faculty, students, and team members improve engagement during these presentations. Helping all stakeholders better understand our services and clarify purpose and impact. Through these efforts, we have been able to reach hundreds of students each semester.



Problem Solving

As Berkeley is entrusted with additional responsibilities to her original job description, she has access to information that is typically private regarding our office impact and outreach. Prior to a system update for tracking student employee notes allowed for better reporting, Berkeley manually tracked total appointments and appointment evaluations for over 18 months. She supported me in this effort as it helped to provide feedback to our upline for our annual report.

Previously, Berkeley worked as a project manager on a role to host a panel of women to speak to students exploring career options and considering career issues for women. From initiation to the final event, Berkeley was spearheading a project that allowed her to lead out in a way that exposed her to problem-solving in real time. This event was Unlock Your Story, a collaborative event hosted by Women's Services and Resources. Since this was a pilot offering this past Fall, many of the processes we needed to implement were created by Berkeley to make it run smoothly. For example, to assist in helping the panel of women to prepare for their speaking parts and since they would not be able to all be in the same room at the same time prior to the event, to help it run smoothly, Berkeley created a speaker guide so that all of the speakers would be on the same page. This has now become a standard practice as this event happened again this past semester and we were able to use the framework that Berkeley created.

Digital Technology

As Berkeley's direct supervisor, I have observed her remarkable desire to learn and master new skills as she adapts to her role as an exploration specialist. This role is a paraprofessional role, which means that our student team must learn to master the many student management systems and technologies in our office, similar to our full-time advisors. When she first started, Berkeley quickly mastered the many student information pages, email, notetaking management system, and our appointment scheduler. On top of these essential platforms, in addition to her essential responsibilities, she took on some projects that required additional training that she wholeheartedly wanted to learn and master. She attended an Excel training class to better track our outreach efforts, learned how to use Qualtrics for data reporting to facilitate outreach requests (as mentioned above), and even learned to master design tools on our PowerPoint and Canvas platforms to reach our varying audiences.

Most recently, our office navigated towards using Salesforce for student data management and as a scheduler within a few days with masterful adaptation. Berkeley was quick to make the switch. This is typical for Berkeley. For example, over the past two summers she was invited to serve as a co-facilitator for a week-long training for full-time professional advisors through a partnership that our office had with another university (Florida Atlantic University) to assist as a co-facilitator and host the Appreciative Advising Institute in July with a primary role as technology support via this Zoom for 4-5 hours per day. (This role is usually only given to experienced advisors or graduate students.) With only 6 hours of training, and very little prior experience, Berkeley rose to the occasion hosted a successful training. Speaking of her professionalism in this area, I later was told by one of her trainers that Berkeley was "so quick to learn that it was if she absorbed the information like a sponge and executed like an expert". In this role she was able to both represent BYU and show that undergraduates could be trusted in this role.



Professionalism

Berkeley is professionalism personified and her work ethic is unmatched. After graduating high school, Berkeley worked in the hospitality industry, rising quickly from a hotel front desk clerk to the front office manager, all while working full-time and taking classes at SLCC. She had a clear career path ahead of her in hotel management, poised to step into a general management role within the next 1-3 years. Hotel management doesn't require a degree to succeed, and she had colleagues who strongly encouraged her to stay where she was. Berkeley consciously set that career aside to transfer to BYU and become a full-time student. However, she was worried that she wouldn't find a role that would allow her to use the skills that she had garnered in her last role as a student, so when she started as an Exploration Specialist, she quickly learned that it would allow her to co-explore with students in an office environment that would be challenging and rewarding. Berkeley's level of professionalism is typically expected from the role, but she possesses the skills to work with various individuals, she is entrusted to work with campus partners.

As Berkeley prepares to graduate this April with a degree in Communication Studies, I have tried to find opportunities that will prepare her for the world of work. I recently invited Berkeley to serve as co-chair for the social media committee for the Office of Appreciative Advising Online Conference. Due to her work with their office in the past, the Office of Appreciative Education encouraged me to bring her on to help with this effort. Berkeley was able to lead out on research for best practices for a communications plan, create sample posts that the director gave feedback on, and propose new ideas that had not been utilized by their team in the past. One of the directors send high praise to Berkeley when she said, "Berkeley, I would hire you in an instant if I could. You are so professional and beyond your years in execution." I was thrilled to see how much others noticed her good work. In addition to being a great student employee, and in this case, a member of the conference committee, I was able to see that Berkeley was also an ambassador for BYU.

Intercultural Fluency

Berkeley's unique circumstances bring a greater awareness for the needs of students. For example, Berkeley has moderate to severe hearing loss in her left ear, which requires that she wear a hearing aid. Berkeley is forthcoming with the fact that she can't hear well out of one ear and, in turn, has a heightened sense of sensitivity to the needs and comfort of others. She will advocate for experiential improvements to make things better for students with varying disabilities and backgrounds.

Berkeley plays a key role in creating our welcoming atmosphere in Exploration Point, which, in our office, we refer to as "disarming." Disarm is one of six phases used in the Appreciative Advising framework which is based in positive psychology, appreciative inquiry, and motivational theory into an advising approach. This means that each student must quickly create a warm, open, and supportive environment so students feel comfortable exploring their values, interests, strengths, and most importantly- their dreams. Berkeley's ability to "disarm" students is top-notch and students that meet with her immediately trust her and work to take next steps to make progress towards their futures.



Intercultural Fluency Cont.

Lastly, Berkeley creates an environment of inclusivity with every interaction she has, whether it is student, faculty, or campus partner. She is thoughtful in the messages she sends to those she meets with, verbally and nonverbally. She also is thoughtful about the environment around her and performs little tasks like straightening the flyers on the Exploration Point front desk every day, because she understands the impact that a welcoming environment has. Berkeley understands that her interaction with a student will shape their experience at Exploration Point, and she does everything she can to make sure that everyone has a great experience with Exploration Point.

Career Management

Berkeley has an internal drive always to do her best work. For example, in her current role Berkeley has had to juggle four main responsibilities and additional responsibilities that she has sought out. She manages one-on-one appointments, captures student experiences through notes and follow-up emails, researches and stays abreast of career paths and trends, and makes class presentations on behalf of our office. She excels in these versatile responsibilities and maintains flexibility as she fulfills these requirements. One of the reasons she even sought out this role was to continually goal and prepare for her future career.

After transferring to BYU, Berkeley sought out the opportunity to work in the Exploration Specialist role specifically for the development it would give her. Since coming to the team, within two months she was working quickly to master the role, so much so that I even took her with me to present at a state-hosted first year experience conference, where she shared insightful reflections on her new experience. Many other state advisors were so impressed with the program, but also with the way our team spoke of it that they were convinced they needed similar program. Many of them would say, “Where do you find such refined students? It’s impressive that your students are so well-spoken and insightful, they sound like regular professionals.”

Lastly, as mentioned previously, Berkeley is intentional and eager to see out experiences that will allow her to prepare for a future career. As a co-facilitator for the Appreciative Advising Institute Berkeley had a chance to be mentored by more experienced advisors. On of them, being the founder of Appreciative Advising, said that Berkeley had “a very bright future” and even tried to recruit Berkeley to work with her office as an intern, and eventually, a graduate student at FAU.

Leadership

As a relatively newer office to campus, Exploration Point, we strive to make a concerted effort to increase awareness of the program and to measure our impact. We do this by giving short presentations and conducting activities with small groups in student development classes and even in workshops. Two short months after Berkeley began working with Exploration Point, we had a student that had managed the coordination of these outreach efforts graduate. Berkeley was willing to take over the coordination of these presentations. Part of this includes working professionally with the faculty members making requests and then working with the team to balance who will go out to make these presentations.



Leadership Cont.

Over time, Berkeley has also been instrumental as a leader to also send out post-presentation evaluations so that we can receive feedback from these faculty members and take strides to make improvements. Berkeley's efforts facilitates reaching out to over 1,000 students per year through these efforts in behalf of our office while helping to manage the time and efforts of a team of 9 fellow exploration specialists. While this type of work might go unnoticed, for many students, this impacts their ability to receive support from our office which in turn allows them to make more timely and intentional effort to choose a major or career path, hopefully helping students to get on track to graduate in a timely manner with greater purpose.

I've also noticed that Berkeley has created a reputation for being professional while leading out for classroom presentations on her own. Instructors will reach out to me and request Berkeley by name to come to their classroom as their preferred presenter because they trust that she will appropriately lead a class in a manner that is appropriate and elevated.

Another way in which Berkeley demonstrates leadership is in her ability to self-manage her time. Berkeley maintains a unique-styled task list that she manages weekly. Daily tracking her projects, to do lists, and ideas. It allows her to stay on top of her daily responsibilities while moving towards her goals. The level in which she exhibits self-management with such a high level of creativity and responsibility makes her someone that I trust to not only take on tasks but follow through.

Teamwork

Berkeley supports her co-workers daily by pitching in on projects, tasks, and initiatives daily. She is constantly looking for ways to contribute and make things better for me as her supervisor, her fellow teammates, and the students that she serves. Sometimes, the tasks that she seeks out are small, but she knows her focus is the big overall picture. She looks for ways to keep the office clean and tidy, even vacuuming wiping down tables when she sees the need since she knows it will make the office a nicer place for students, while others will just ignore the mess. She tidies up our handouts so they look organized and makes requests when we are low on supplies. This attention to detail makes her a great teammate – her small sacrifices make things better for all.

This past year I was invited to work on a committee and almost turned the opportunity down. When given the opportunity to bring on someone to help me, I turned to Berkeley to work as a co-chair on a volunteer conference committee. I did this so she could seek out additional experiences for her time on our team and her future professional life. Berkeley took this opportunity and ran with it. She was able to not only assist me, but also support our two team leads, and the director. She was able to join in conversations, brainstorm ideas, propose possible campaigns, and work to complete our projects by our deadlines. Working with Berkeley is so fun because you know she will hold up her commitments and do an excellent job following through. Towards the end of our project, we delivered a product that could be used for a national campaign. This type of teamwork is how she approaches her daily work in our office. She's a team player you can rely on!