



USG Board of Regents' Felton Jenkins, Jr., Hall of Fame Faculty Award
Portfolio for:

Dr. Natalie Johnson
Professor of Criminal Justice
Dalton State College

Nomination Letter:	
Dr. Bruno Hicks: Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs	1-3
Letter of Support:	
Dr. James Wright: Associate Dean and Criminal Justice Program Coordinator	4-5
Abbreviated Curriculum Vitae	6-8
Teaching and Learning Philosophy, Strategies, and Objectives	9-10
Innovative Teaching Practices to Promote Student Success	11-12
Evidence of Teaching Excellence	13-14
Letters of Support from Current and Past Students:	
Former Student: Kelsey Barnett	15
Current Student: Susie Coyle	16-17



Dr. Bruno G. Hicks
Provost and VP for Academic Affairs
650 College Drive
Dalton, GA 30720
706-272-4420
www.daltonstate.edu

November 20, 2023

Felton Jenkins, Jr., Hall of Fame Faculty Award Committee
Re: Natalie Johnson, Ph.D.

To the Committee:

I am writing to nominate Dr. Natalie Johnson for the Felton Jenkins, Jr., Hall of Fame Faculty Award. Dr. Johnson is a Professor of Criminal Justice at Dalton State College in Dalton, Georgia, where she has taught since fall 2012. Natalie is a dedicated and enthusiastic educator who truly cares about her students. I give her my highest recommendation.

Dr. Johnson teaches criminal justice and sociology classes for Dalton State in various formats—face-to-face, hybrid, online, and study abroad. She also teaches for the eMajor Criminal Justice program and has served as a Subject Matter Expert for eMajor Criminal Justice. Whatever or wherever Dr. Johnson teaches, she supports student success using high-impact practices. Her classes are writing-intensive, requiring journaling, intensive writing assignments in and out-of-class, and/or written exams. These practices help students digest course material while also developing students' critical thinking and writing skills. Assigning journal writing is particularly valuable to students taking criminal justice classes, such as human trafficking and family violence, as many students have experienced trauma in their lives. Dr. Johnson reports that being able to journal is not just academic—it is healing.

Dr. Johnson also implements the high-impact practice of service learning in her criminal justice courses, requiring 8-10 hours of community service at designated or instructor-approved locations. She understands that this is not only a valuable learning experience for students but also allows students to network and earn resume-worthy work experience. Natalie has had several former students find work in non-profits thanks to the experience they gained through their required community service. Guest speakers are another important teaching tool for Dr. Johnson. Natalie brings in professionals from around the community who share their real-world experiences and expertise with students. Included among those who speak in her classes are former students. These individuals provide Dr. Johnson's current students with valuable information about their discipline while also serving as inspirational examples of Dalton State graduates' success.

Dr. Johnson also provides out-of-the-classroom opportunities for growth and success. She serves as a research mentor for criminal justice students and has presented posters with students at the Annual Conference of the American Society of Criminology in 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2022, and 2023. Natalie strongly advocates for study abroad, serving on Dalton State's International Education Committee since 2016 and participating in its Study Abroad Fair annually. She has also taught abroad, participating in the China General Studies program (Asia Council) during Summer 2014 and 2019. She taught in the Taiwan/Hong Kong Study Abroad program for

criminal justice students (Asia Council) in the Summer of 2015 and sought to teach in the Taiwan Criminal Justice Study Abroad program in May 2020 and May 2022. However, both of these programs were canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Natalie has also taught in Europe, participating in the Summer 2016 Madrid Study Abroad program (European Council), and she will be teaching in Waterford, Ireland, as part of the European Council/USG Goes Global in the summer of 2024. Outside of the USG, Dr. Johnson has taught in the summers of 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2019 as part of the British Studies Program-London for Midwestern State University.

Dr. Johnson is dedicated not just to her students' academic achievements but also to supporting their physical and mental well-being. Natalie helps her students by beginning each semester teaching self-care. She then checks in with her students regularly about their self-care at the beginning of her classes. Students truly appreciate her commitment to them; for example, in an end-of-the-semester evaluation of CRJU 4350: Family Violence in spring 2022, one student wrote: Dr. Johnson's *"classes have molded me into the person I am, and she shows how much she cares about her students as well as the material."*

Though already an exemplary educator, Dr. Johnson understands there is always opportunity for growth. Thus, this academic year 2023-2024, she is participating in the Governor's Teaching Fellows Program. This program is offered through the University of Georgia's Institute of Higher Education and provides faculty from across the state the chance to develop impactful teaching skills. In the spring of 2016, 2017, and 2023, Dr. Johnson's peers at Dalton State recognized her commitment to teaching and learning by nominating her for the Dalton State College Teaching Excellence Award. Natalie won the award in 2023. That she was selected to receive this prestigious award speaks to Dr. Johnson's dedication; however, her contributions to student success are represented even more strongly by the words of her students. Since 2018, Natalie has received 29 "Thank a Teacher" letters from students through Dalton State's Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. These letters, along with her student evaluations of teaching, demonstrate Dr. Johnson's impact on her students. For example, a student from CRJU 3710: Special Topics in Criminal Justice in fall 2021 wrote in an end-of-the-semester evaluation:

Thank you, Dr. Johnson, thank you... Going into this course I was terrified that I wasn't going to survive and potentially fail like I have many times before, something about this class was different and I truly think it was you. The way you care about each one of us. The way that you don't just lecture and then leave. You invest in each and every student and every single class period. If I grow up to be half the educator that you are then I know I will have done something right. I don't know if you'll read this but know that you've made a difference to at least this one.

Dr. Johnson has made a difference to this student and many more, but not just through teaching. She is also active in impactful service activities. For instance, Natalie is Dalton State's chapter advisor for Lambda Alpha Epsilon (LAE), a criminal justice student organization. In this role, she organizes guest speakers and field trips; one year, Natalie even took 15 students to the national conference in Austin, Texas. She also works with LAE to organize the annual Walk a Mile in Her Shoes event on campus on behalf of the Northwest Georgia Family Crisis Center

(NWGFCC). Dr. Johnson's dedication to LAE was recognized in 2017 when she was nominated for RSO Advisor of the Year at Dalton State's Seventh Annual Student Leadership Banquet. That same year, she also received the Betty Higgins Domestic Violence Victim Advocate Award from NWGFCC, which recognizes individuals who serve as victim advocates and work for community awareness of domestic violence, who provide services or education, or who work to hold offenders accountable.

Dr. Johnson has also volunteered her free time at numerous school open houses, majors fairs, and Week of Welcome events, including Rage Days, Dalton State's overnight retreat for incoming first-year students at the Ocoee Retreat Center. She serves as a member of the Hardship Withdrawal Committee, and for several years, she was a member of Dalton State's CARE Team (Campus Assessment, Response, and Evaluation Team). The latter identifies and assesses students who are potentially distressed or who may exhibit concerning behaviors, and it helps those students access the appropriate campus experts, departments, and resources.

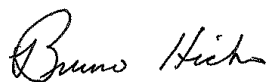
In addition, since 2016, Dr. Johnson has also served as a researcher/interviewer for the Justice for Incarcerated Survivors (JFIS) Project, which is sponsored by the Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence (GCADV). In this role, Natalie interviews women incarcerated for killing their partners or for committing crimes coerced by their partners. She then writes letters to the parole board on these women's behalf. Since she began this work, 17 women have been paroled. Though it is difficult to say what role her work played in this, it would be a disservice to Dr. Johnson's hard work to say that it did not have some influence. Also impressive is that this year, Natalie will have a student shadowing her during interviews, providing yet another young person with valuable, real-life experience.

Because of her dedication to service, in 2016, Dr. Johnson was nominated for Dalton State's Service Excellence Award. In 2015 and 2021, she was also nominated for—and in 2021 won—the Truett Lomax Unsung Hero Award at Dalton State. This award recognizes one employee and one student who puts their heart and soul into everything but often goes unrecognized. These individuals often work behind the scenes, demonstrating determination and hard work, going above and beyond as a member of the Dalton State community.

From promoting study abroad to mentoring student research to assigning community service—and everything in between— Dr. Johnson is clearly committed to the success of her students. For these reasons, I enthusiastically submit this nomination and urge the committee to give Dr. Johnson's materials full consideration.

If you have any questions, please get in touch with me at (706) 272-2491 or via email at bhicks@daltonstate.edu.

Sincerely,



Dr. Bruno G. Hicks
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Dalton State College



James L. Wright Ph.D.
Associate Dean, School of Arts and Sciences
Professor of Sociology and Criminal Justice
Program Coordinator, Criminal Justice
Dalton State College
650 College Dr.
Dalton, GA 30720
jwright11@daltonstate.edu
706.272.2539

November 13, 2023

Re: Letter of Support for Dr. Natalie Johnson
Professor of Criminal Justice
Dalton State College

Dear Selection Committee:

I am pleased to provide a letter of support for Dr. Natalie Johnson for the USG Board of Regents' Felton Jenkins, Jr., Hall of Fame Faculty Award. During her tenure here at Dalton State, Dr. Johnson has worked tirelessly to provide our students with the best educational experience imaginable. She enjoys interacting with her students; she loves teaching and is a dedicated servant to her students, the college, and the community; and is constantly looking for ways to keep students engaged in the learning process and advancing their learning by implementing service-learning activities in the classes she teaches. Dr. Johnson's accomplishments are extremely lengthy and are highlighted in other letters of support in her packet. Therefore, my intent is to highlight her ability to meld her passion for advocacy and service into the classes she teaches.

Dr. Johnson is a staunch supporter of the service-learning high-impact pedagogical approach to education. She teaches 3 courses that include a service-learning component: Victimology, Family Violence, and Human Trafficking. To fulfill requirements, students are given the option to volunteer at the local crisis center (Northwest Georgia Family Crisis Center [NWGAFCC] or an agency that serves victims. Students are then required to write a short paper on their experiences. Dr. Johnson has found that through service-learning, her students have developed an advocacy-centered approach to learning about crime and justice. Some of her students have gone over and beyond the 10 required service-learning hours and do more; with some even securing employment at one of the agencies after graduation. These students are not only giving back to their community, but this service-learning component sets them up for success professionally.

Dr. Johnson also incorporates intensive writing assignments in the courses she teaches at the recommendation of our support agencies (e.g., Dalton Police Department, Ga. Department of Community Supervision, the Conasauga Judicial Circuit District Attorney's office, etc.). These writing assignments are geared towards having students not only reflect on personal experiences, but also provide opportunities for students to improve their writing skills and improve self-expression. One assignment of particular interest is the journal assignment she has incorporated in the courses listed above. Given the nature of these courses, Dr. Johnson has found that journaling not only forces students to work on and improve their writing skills but allows them to decompress and

process the traumatizing information they were just exposed to. Through these exercises, Dr. Johnson has found a healing element expressed by her students, providing opportunities for them to deal with personal victimization and trauma themselves. Journaling thus becomes a means for them to vent and cope, while allowing them to practice and improve their writing skills.

Through her teaching style and techniques, Dr. Johnson exposes her students to the possibilities one may face when entering the criminal justice profession. She is a stickler for “process,” specifically emphasizing the importance of her students exercising ethical principles as they complete their writing assignments. The additional lessons her students take from her assignments emphasize fundamental principles common to the criminal justice discipline and profession: maintaining integrity, ethical principles, honesty, practicality, professionalism, and service.

In conclusion, I commend the effort Dr. Johnson puts into her teaching and mentorship. She is a consummate professional and academic. She works tirelessly to remain current in the issues and research within criminal justice and is effective at passing the information on to her students. As mentioned earlier, Dr. Johnson’s accomplishments must be commended. She is an excellent teacher and has an uncanny ability to meld her passion for advocacy and service into the classes she teaches. She truly cares about her students’ development as scholars and professionals. Dr. Natalie Johnson is deserving of the USG Board of Regents’ Felton Jenkins, Jr., Hall of Fame Faculty Award.

Feel free to contact me if you require more information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James L. Wright". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

James L. Wright Ph.D.

Natalie J. Johnson, Ph.D., Professor of Criminal Justice

EDUCATION:

- **University of North Texas**, Department of Sociology, Denton, Doctor of Philosophy, August 2013.
- **University of North Texas**, Department of Sociology, Denton, TX, Master of Science in Sociology, December 2007.
- **Midwestern State University**, Department of Criminal Justice, Wichita Falls, TX, Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice, With Distinction, May 2006.

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS:

- *Professor of Criminal Justice*, Fall 2023-present, Dalton State College, Department of Social Sciences & History; *Tenured* effective August 1, 2019; *Associate Professor of Criminal Justice*, Fall 2017-Summer 2023, Dalton State College, Department of Social Sciences; *Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice*, Fall 2012-Summer 2017, Dalton State College, Department of Social Sciences
- *Taught for the following study abroad programs:* (1.) Summer 2014 China General Studies program (Asia Council); (2.) Summer 2015 Taiwan/Hong Kong Study Abroad program for Criminal Justice students (Asia Council); (3.) Summer 2016 Madrid Study Abroad program (European Council); (4.) Summer 2019 China General Studies program (Asia Council); Attempted the Taiwan Criminal Justice Study Abroad program in May 2020 and May 2022, but both were cancelled due to COVID-19; (5.) Forthcoming Summer 2024: Waterford, Ireland; and *Sociology Professor of Record*, Summer 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2019 British Studies Program-London, Midwestern State University. Program taught at Queen Mary College, University of London in London, England
- *Instructor for the e-Major Criminal Justice program*, Fall 2015-Summer 2017 and Summer 2020-present. All courses taught were/are outside of my 4-4 semester teaching load; *Subject Matter Expert for the e-Major Criminal Justice program*, Redesigned the following courses: CRJU 3800 Fall 2020 and CRJU 4700 Summer 2021. Worked on a team to design one of the new Social Justice courses SJUS 3050 in Spring 2021. *Instructor for eCore SOCI 1101* Spring 2021-present
- *Teaching Fellow* (part-time), Fall 2008- Spring 2012, University of North Texas, Department of Sociology & *Adjunct* (part-time), Fall 2008- Spring 2012, North Central Texas College, Department of Social Sciences

SPECIAL AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS AND OTHER HONORS:

- In Spring 2016 I was nominated for the **Excellence in Service award**.
- In Spring 2017 I was nominated for **RSO Advisor of the Year award**.
- In October 2017, I was nominated for and awarded the **Betty Higgins Victim Advocate award**. This award is intended for professionals or community members who are victim advocates and who work for community awareness of Domestic Violence, who provide services or education, or who work to hold offenders accountable.

- In Spring 2021, I was nominated for and awarded the **Truett Lomax Unsung Hero** award. This award is named after Melvin Truett Lomax who was instrumental in the founding of Dalton State College and spearheaded a public relations campaign to raise awareness of a college's value to Dalton. The Unsung Hero Award is presented to one Dalton State employee (and one student) who puts his or her heart and soul into everything he/she does, but often goes unrecognized. These individuals work “behind the scenes” demonstrating determination and hard work going above and beyond as a member of the Dalton State Community. *I was also nominated for this award in Spring 2015.*
- In Spring 2023, I was nominated for and awarded the **Faculty Excellence in Teaching Award** at Dalton State College. To win this award, several criteria are considered, including student evaluations, peer evaluations, instructional methods, and creating new courses or academic programs. *I was also nominated for this award in 2016 and 2017.*
- **Georgia Governor's Teaching Fellow** at the University of Georgia, 2023-2024
- In Fall 2023, I was nominated for the **USG Board of Regents' Felton Jenkins, Jr., Hall of Fame Faculty Award** by the deans at Dalton State.

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES:

Publications

Johnson, N.J. (2023—forthcoming). Crime. In *Social Problems: A Case Study Approach* (6th ed.). Kendall Hunt Publishing. (As well as the 3rd, 4th, and 5th editions)

Grants: Assisted Dr. Hassan Elnajaar on an Affordable Learning Georgia Grant for Sociology (2015). We were awarded a grant to develop supplemental resources for the Open Stax Sociology 2E textbook.

Research:

Since 2016, I have served as a researcher/interviewer for the Justice for Incarcerated Survivors (JFIS) Project, which is sponsored by the Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence (GCADV): We (I) interview women in Georgia prisons who have been incarcerated for killing their intimate partner (out of self-defense, but was not recognized by the court or took a plea bargain deal out of fear) and/or those women who were forced/coerced into committing a crime by their violent partner. Our goal is to collect as much information to write letters to the parole board to get these women paroled. Thus far, Georgia Department of Corrections (GDC) has given us all positive feedback and has told us to keep doing what we're doing because it's making a difference. We know of 17 women who have been paroled since we started, but we cannot say it's a direct result of our work—we can only listen to what the GDC tells us—and hopefully that number will keep increasing. We were able to resume conducting interviews after the pandemic in April 2022 and have continued. The unique part moving forward is that I have a student who will be shadowing me as she aspires to be a forensic psychologist who works in prisons. This will be a unique experience for her that would otherwise not be afforded.

Courses Taught

SOCI 1101 Introduction to Sociology, CRJU 1100 Introduction to Criminal Justice, CRJU 3200 Criminology, CRJU 3450 White Collar Crime (a course I developed), CRJU 3500 Comparative Criminology (a course I developed for study abroad); CRJU 3710 (Special Topics: Sex Trafficking; Labor & Organ Trafficking—both courses I developed), CRJU 3800 Race, Ethnicity, and Criminal Justice, CRJU 3810 Victimology, CRJU 4200 Profiling the Serial Offender; CRJU 4350 Family Violence; CRJU 4700 Ethical Issues in Criminal Justice, CRJU 4750 Advanced Criminology Theory (a course I developed); **Online only:** CRJU 3100 Criminal Law and CRJU 3400 Juvenile Delinquency

Conference Presentations and Attendance

1. Annual Conference of the American Society of Criminology (ASC) in 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2022, forthcoming 2023
 - Mentored undergraduate students' research for their poster presentations in 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019, 2022, and upcoming 2023.
2. Southwestern Social Science Association (SSSA) in 2008, 2009, 2013; The Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences (ACJS) 2014; and CrimeCon 2023
3. As LAE RSO advisor, I have taken LAE members to the following conferences:
 - *Regional* conferences in Orlando, FL 2014; Huntsville, AL 2015; & our chapter, *Delta Sigma Upsilon*, hosted the regional conference in Chattanooga, TN in 2016.
 - *National* conferences in Nashville, TN in 2015, Sacramento, CA in 2016, Austin, TX in 2017, and Hunt Valley, MD in 2019; Upcoming in Grapevine, TX, March 2024

SERVICE TO THE CAMPUS/COMMUNITY/PROFESSION

- Faculty Senate at Dalton State College, Senator for the Department of Social Sciences & History, Fall 2022-present
- USG Regents Academic Advisory Committee, Sociology Representative, Fall 2022-now
- Academic Programs Committee, Dalton State College, Fall 2022-2023 & Fall 2014-2016
- Board Member, Board of Directors for the Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence (GCADV), Spring 2022-2023
- Statewide (GA) Human Trafficking Taskforce member, Spring 2021-present
- Hardship Withdrawal committee member, Spring 2020-present
- 7th Annual Savannah Traffick Jam Conference, Planning Committee Member, 2021
- CARE Team core committee member, Dalton State College, Spring 2018-Fall 2021
- President, Board of Directors for the Northwest Georgia Family Crisis Center (NWGAFFCC), Spring 2017-2018. Served on all subcommittees: Executive (Chair), Personnel, Finance, Legislative, Special Events; Served as President Elect in 2016 and Past President in 2019. Board member 2014-2019.
- Organized the Annual Walk a Mile in her Shoes fundraising event in October 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023, Fall 2015-present
- International Education Committee member, Spring 2016-present
- Lambda Alpha Epsilon (Criminal Justice Fraternity), Chapter Advisor, Spring 2016-present / co-chapter advisor beginning in 2014.
- Social Sciences Faculty Evaluation Committee, Dalton State College, Fall 2014-2016
- Criminal Justice Advisory Board committee member, Dalton State College, Spring 2013-present

Teaching and learning philosophy, strategies, and objectives.

The moment I stepped into the classroom fifteen years ago to give my first lecture as a graduate student, I knew this is where I wanted to be. I loved everything about it—the preparations behind the scenes, the actual teaching part, but what I loved most was student interaction. I developed my personal teaching philosophy based on four incredibly influential professors I had. My favorite things about my undergraduate professors are the reason I went to graduate school. All four were passionate, enthusiastic, caring, stern but fair, and what I think is most important is that they taught me how to think and not what to think. They knew my name. I wasn't just a number. They did not hold my hand, but they guided me and held me accountable. They were approachable and made it known that they were there to help. I knew that these were all the things I wanted to emulate as I became a professor, and I have held true to this since day one to now—fifteen years later. Yet, I have grown in many ways, though my love for teaching has only continued to flourish and has not waned.

I use multiple tools and strategies to engage my students and to ensure student success. These include High Impact Practices (HIPs) and additional methods such as the Socratic method. I use PowerPoints (outline method, visuals, etc.), several examples, discussion, open dialogue, documentaries, podcasts, video clips, current events, handouts, readings, true crime books, and guest speakers. One of my primary goals in the classroom is to be engaging. Teaching should not just be talking at them day after day. Instead, I actively seek to engage my students in conversation using the Socratic method in addition to the necessary lectures. I make every effort to include all students during the lecture and give examples of material by using them in a variety of scenarios. This brings the material to life, and it gives the students the ability to personally connect with the material. In fact, one of my favorite engaging activities that I learned long ago is the “Think-Pair-Share” technique, which allows all students to thoughtfully reflect on what is being asked of them, provides them the opportunity to work with others, and finally gives all students the chance to speak in class who ordinarily would not speak. In addition, I aim to make sure that I allow ample time for questions and time for discussion. I also make it clear from day one that questions are welcome at any time and that there are no stupid questions. To reassure students that I mean this, if someone answers incorrectly aloud in class, I respond with a comment like “Not quite correct, but E for effort!” Or “Hey, it's ok to not know everything. I don't know everything and we're all here to learn! Good try and thank you for trying!” This reassures students that I simply want effort and to learn that it is ok to not know the answer and to never feel embarrassed for getting something wrong.

Furthermore, I actively work to make sure my classroom is a safe place for everyone. I believe in and require a classroom where students can openly voice their ideas, thoughts, views, personal stories, and opinions without consequence or fear of judgment by me or others. The following student comments reflect my dedication to safe spaces for learning: “*Was very open into hearing our opinion...*” And “*Dr. Johnson always made me feel welcome and like my opinion is valued. She is a very fair professor and has the same expectation for everyone.*” While these are only two comments, they represent the tone of my course evaluations for fifteen years.

Furthermore, I am an advocate for mental health for all, including our students. I often joke with my students that they are my “kids.” As a professor, one of my roles is not only for them to learn but to prepare them for the world outside of college. While a professor is not a caregiver per se, in a way we are. It is our duty to caringly guide them through this phase of life, while also maintaining boundaries and upholding a high level of professionalism. Despite being strict, I am compassionate, empathetic, kind, caring, and fair. I know “life happens” for all of us and I want

my students to know that they can come to me for help at any time. They know that I am an email or office visit away if they have questions or concerns about the course material, life in general, and/or the future. Above all, I want to inspire them to be the greatest people and professionals they can be. My passion and energy help achieve that goal and demonstrate excellence in teaching. The following comments illustrate a pattern of care for our students outside of 2023: “*Dr. Johnson is a phenomenal teacher. She is willing to work with students who are swamped with family problems, medical problems, or even just struggling in life. She is constantly there for her students.*” (Spring 2021). “[She] *Emphasized self-care!!!! No other professor has done that. It shows that we are all human.*” (Spring 2021). And “*Her love and support for her students is amazing and unmatched at Dalton State.*” (Spring 2022).

I care about our students’ physical and mental health. One thing that I have done since Summer 2018 is to teach self-care the first day of every class for every course every semester. To put this into practice outside the first day of class, I check in on them throughout the semester by beginning class by asking them how their self-care is going and I genuinely expect responses. Some respond they are doing really well, some that say “eh, it could be better,” and some acknowledge that it is not very good. For those that respond the last two ways, I reach out to them to see what, if anything, I can do to help. I recently gave a “Bold Talk” on “Teaching & Practicing Self-Care: The Benefits for Faculty, Staff, and Students.” The presentation was very well received, but during the presentation I included anecdotes from students from Spring 2023 regarding just how much I care about them and self-care for all. One said in a journal in one of my human trafficking courses, “*The first week of class we talked about self-care and about emotional hygiene. I have never met a professor that has cared so much about how we feel personally about the subjects and course. I was really shocked to find out how Dr. Johnson showed how much she cared about our emotional hygiene.*” Another student said, “*I left the first class feeling relieved and valued. The emphasis and care that the instructor placed on the importance of mental health made me feel at ease.*” I feel like the last statement is the epitome of how I approach my courses—that *students feel seen, heard, and valued.* When those goals are achieved, student success is an easy outcome. To further illustrate my commitment to student success and genuine care, a student from 2016 (before I started the self-care regiment on the first day) stated, “*Dr. Johnson cares about her students. She cares if they succeed or not. She goes completely out of her way to work with her students. I struggled in the beginning of the semester with Criminology. Dr. Johnson offered to tutor me. She offered study sessions for her students. She made herself available to answer emails in a very timely manner, when I had a question. She did this and she teaches 6 classes this semester. She is like no other professor I have ever had. She is amazing.*”

In closing, I have dedicated my career to many things, but especially to excellence in teaching. One student among many attests to this: “*Dr. Johnson is a wonderful soul; her classes are always safe from judgment and she supports other points of view while encouraging others to shine their light on issues. A true guiding light for the American future.*” (Fall 2019). As such, my most important goal is to effectively prepare students for a career in the Criminal Justice field or outside occupations, and life in general. My hope is that they will learn how to write well, communicate well, follow rules, have integrity, respect others, to be collegial, to enjoy their careers, and to overall be amazing human beings. I want them to have a voice for themselves and to be a voice for the voiceless. I want to make a difference in their lives, and I want them to know that they can and will make a difference, too. To me, that is excellence in teaching which easily leads to student success in college and student success in preparing them for their careers.

Innovative teaching techniques to promote student success.

While there are many techniques to promote student success, my approach to student success is focusing on high impact practices encouraged by Dalton State and USG, particularly intensive writing, service learning, and teaching for study abroad programs. My courses, even freshmen level, are writing-intensive courses. I use extensive written exams, in-class writing activities, journaling, and writing assignments outside of class. I have had countless students comment that while it was tough at first, they appreciated being pushed because they realized they were capable of so much more than they thought when they began college. This serves to build self-confidence. With each writing assignment, they improve and realize they *can* do it. To see a student blossom from freshman to graduating senior is truly an incredible process to witness. It is what professors live for when dedicated to student success. I teach many depressing courses such as victimology, family violence, human trafficking, etc. These courses require intense journaling to express and process how they are feeling and what they are learning. Many students have been victimized by something—some worse than others. I have had numerous students tell me how healing my classes have been and how the assignments and open classroom have facilitated that healing. Most importantly, they realize what happened to them was not their fault. At the same time, this allows them to practice their writing skills. Their number one tool working in the Criminal Justice System is “their word.” Second to that are their writing skills. Poorly written offense reports can break/ruin a case in court. My former students who guest speak for me and my current students that intern attest to this. They have seen it. While I provide them an outlet for the heinous material they are learning, I am also working to improve their writing skills. To back up these claims, students have said, “*Dr. Johnson is very enthusiastic about all her courses and that makes it more interesting; it’s nice when the person you are listening to shows that they care and enjoy teaching. Her courses are very challenging, which is refreshing.*” Another wrote, “*All the writing! I know it’s strange to like that, but it really helped me take in more.*”

Additionally, I have actively incorporated service learning into my courses on victimology, family violence, and human trafficking. Field trips and/or attending accountability courts are also required in victimology, criminology, and ethical issues in criminal justice. Since 2016, I have required 8-10 hours of community service in these courses at a designated location (e.g., Northwest Georgia Family Crisis Center [NWGAFCC], End Slavery Georgia, etc.) or one of their choosing with my approval. This provides not only hands-on experience, but also a chance for them to make a name for themselves—a reputation—and an even better chance of being hired after (or just before) graduation. I have had several graduates volunteer at the NWGAFCC, subsequently get hired upon graduation, and then move up in their careers. For example, one student is now the coordinator for the Domestic Violence Accountability Courts. She got her start as a volunteer at the NWGAFCC and then worked for them. Another student who volunteered for End Slavery Georgia will soon be hired there once funding is approved.

The student above that volunteered at End Slavery Georgia currently works at Adult Protection Services (APS). She, along with most students, had never heard of this service and career opportunity until I brought guest speakers into my family violence course. Without this, she would not be where she is today. That said, I also include many guest speakers in my courses as they reinforce the material I have taught in class. A comment from CRJU 4350 Family Violence stated, “*The public [guest] speakers that we had were fantastic. They really help to put the lessons to reality. I enjoyed how open the class felt to express ideas, ask questions, and give opinions.*”

An additional HIP is study abroad programs. I firmly believe in learning firsthand from other cultures and have been teaching for study abroad programs since 2010. I know this is not feasible for all students, but I am thrilled to offer such opportunities for the ones that can and to teach those who do not believe they can afford to study abroad that they can (such as scholarships, fundraising ideas, etc.). I was once in their shoes; I did not believe I could ever afford to do a study abroad program until I had a professor take the time to help me navigate the process. His everlasting mentorship lives on through me and my love for study abroad. I have taught for eight study abroad programs (4 in London, 2 in China, 1 in Taiwan/Hong Kong, 1 in Madrid, Spain, attempted twice more in Taiwan for 2020 and 2022 but were cancelled due to COVID-19 even though I had recruited at least 10 students from Dalton State to go each time, and one upcoming Summer 2024 in Waterford, Ireland). One student from Dalton State that I recruited to the China Study Abroad program for 2019 stated, *“Going to China was a once in a lifetime opportunity. I was able to apply the material I was learning in the courses to the country/culture all while being able to explore and have fun. It changed my perspective on life as a whole, as well as a new understanding on how the criminal justice system affects different countries, races, ethnicities, and cultures.”* This is exactly how I felt after my first study abroad experience as a student and am forever grateful for the professor who showed me the way. Finally, I am able to use all of my experiences teaching abroad in the classroom upon return such as teaching about how other criminal justice systems operate compared to ours in the U.S. These three HIPs have consistently contributed to student success inside and outside of the classroom.

I would also like to add a new technique of student assessment that I have tried this Fall 2023 in my Ethical Issues in Criminal Justice course. Over the summer, I toyed with the idea of oral exams instead of written exams as our department is focusing on improving communication skills in addition to writing skills. I still put written exams in the syllabus for this course as I was unsure about it. That said, I was accepted in the Governor’s Teaching Fellow (GTF) Program this academic year (2023-2024). I have learned many things in this course thus far, but in a conversation with my instructor, Cynthia Alby, we discussed the idea and practice of oral exams. I told her I wanted to try it but was apprehensive. She said (and I’m paraphrasing), “Well first, I don’t call them oral exams as that’s intimidating. I like to call them something else.” As soon as she said that I immediately thought of *“Conversations with Dr. Johnson.”* I voiced that to her and she said that sounds fantastic! She (and the GTF program) gave me the courage to try it out. Upon return to my ethics class in September, I had an open conversation with them about it. I voiced that yes, it is an oral exam, but that, as named, it is more of a conversation with them. I do not give study guides for written exams, but since this was so new, I told them I’d give them a study guide and that I’d pick “x” amount of questions from it, so they knew how to prepare. We put it into practice with the option that if they were not happy with how it went, they could opt for the written version and the higher score would stick. However, no one opted for the written version after it was done. One student stated, *“‘Conversations with Dr. Johnson’ was a unique way to hold an exam and I liked it. After our conversation, I felt more like I was educating you on a topic and it gave me more confidence of my knowledge than from a written exam.”*

The main theme is that it gave them a chance to “think it out” and that I could probe them if they got stuck. With written exams, if they are stuck, they are stuck. They appreciated it so much that they 100% opted for “Conversations with Dr. Johnson” for the final instead of the written option. The scores were still about the same as written, so it’s not necessarily easier, but rather is a different method of assessing students that appears to be successful and something that they greatly valued as an alternative to written exams.

Evidence of Teaching Excellence

The following provides evidence of support excellence in teaching for **the USG Board of Regents' Felton Jenkins, Jr., Hall of Fame Faculty Award** of which I am honored. My course evaluations, on average, are always above the average in the Department of Social Sciences & History, as well as for our Criminal Justice program. They consistently range from 4.6% - 5.0% (5.0% being the highest) with the majority ranging between 4.8% - 5.0%. Not earning a 5.0% in every course only suggests, to me, there is always room for improvement even if I have done the very best I could each semester. Below you will see evidence of hands-on experiences such as attending Domestic Violence Accountability Court and Drug Accountability Court, as well as completing book analyses in video presentation format. Built within, you will also find excerpts from course evaluations, past letters of support, and peer evaluations.

Most of our students are going to work inside of a courtroom in some aspect such as victim advocates, probation/parole officers, law enforcement, attorneys, etc. Thus, it is crucial they see how the inside of a courtroom works and not just trials, but accountability courts. When I teach Criminology, our goal is to understand why people engage in certain behaviors, including the use of drugs. Our job is not to judge, but to understand. One component of this is to have the judge in charge of Drug Accountability Court (DAC) and a drug treatment provider guest speak to the class and for them to attend DAC. This allows students to see the Criminal Justice System (CJS) in action. They get to see how this probated sentence and drug treatment is superior to incarcerating them (which is backed up by empirical evidence). In fact, one student just presented her research on "The Success of Drug Accountability Court over Incarceration" at the prestigious American Society of Criminology (ASC) conference in Philadelphia, PA. She had never heard of DAC before taking Criminology. Now, not only has she been interning with DAC the last year, but she is also preparing to go to graduate school to earn her LCSW so that she can be a drug treatment provider. This is one of many successes of hands-on learning I have our students do.

Additionally, in my Family Violence course, students are required to attend Domestic Violence Accountability Court (DVC). In this course, our job is to understand the causes of domestic violence (DV), as well as laws and policies surrounding DV that are effective and evidence-based. Like DAC above, DVC serves the same purpose in that not all offenders, including DV offenders need to be incarcerated. Students learn that DV is mostly a learned behavior, thus if offenders make into DVC after an intense screening process, they must attend courses to unlearn abusive behavior, to learn what a healthy relationship and family look like, and most importantly, to be held accountable for their behavior. Offenders must see the judge every so often depending on their status in the program. The judge in charge of DVC guest speaks in the course and then students must attend DVC, which is a hands-on experience that is unmatched. One student from this course in Spring 2019 stated, *"I think everything Dr. Johnson did helped me throughout the course. I also really liked how students were able to discuss and talk freely about examples or ask questions, because that also helped a lot during the course. Having us attend DV court and having us volunteer were really great experiences that also helped me learn more in this class."* Another from Spring 2022 stated, *"Dr. Johnson is fantastic. She is passionate and enthusiastic about teaching, which makes us students eager to listen and learn. Communication with her is amazing and her feedback on assignments is very helpful and personal. Again, the speakers are fantastic as well as the out-of-class activities, such as the DV court observation."* One student who took this course in Spring 2017 began as a volunteer at the Northwest Georgia Family Crisis Center as a requirement of volunteering and she was also

required to attend DVC. She then got a job at the Crisis Center and now, as of the last two years, is the DVC Coordinator. In a letter of support for tenure from Judge Morris, who runs DVC wrote, *“Having seen Dr. Johnson interact with her students, I can tell you she is a remarkable teacher. Outside the classroom, I have worked in the justice system with some of Dr. Johnson’s former students. In my experience, they do outstanding work and make valuable contributions to our justice system and community. Those I know best exude a level of professionalism and confidence that comes from an education that prepared them to excel in their field.”*

Furthermore, in times past, I have had students do written book analyses. However, CJ professionals have asked us to have students work on their communication skills. Thus, I have transitioned to having students do video presentations to improve upon their communication skills. For example, communication skills are evidenced as one of the most effective ways to deescalate many situations in law enforcement. While their video presentations are not about deescalating a situation, they must effectively articulate their analysis in video presentation format. This increases their confidence in speaking and ability to communicate under some type of pressure (their presentations must be within a certain time limit). One colleague and CJ professional, Brandon Bell—Chief of Department of Community Supervision in the Lookout Mountain circuit, stated in a letter of support for me for full professorship, *“Dr. Johnson goes out of her way to create just the sort of rich collegiate experiences that will impact her students for the remainder of their careers—and lives. Students communicate to me just how tough her courses can be, but in the same breath they express how important the experiences have been, and how proud they are to have achieved them. I have watched Dr. Johnson schedule student trips to the Holocaust Museum in Atlanta when teaching Victimology and have hired a number of Dalton State graduates to serve as law enforcement officers with me—invariably they all speak to the deep inspiration and compassion they experienced as a result of having Dr. Johnson as a professor. I have served in public safety for 21 years and have served as Chief for approximately 10 years. I have led myriad operations and task forces and special events requiring leadership and direction of professional and support personnel numbering in the thousands—and I cannot recall but perhaps one or two who I would consider to be of an equivalent caliber to Dr. Johnson. Her commitment to student and organizational success is unparalleled in my experience.”*

Finally, as I teach many depressing topics as discussed in other documents, I approach teaching my courses with sensitivity and care—the trauma-informed approach. I do not ever want to revictimize a student—it’s horrifying how many of them have been victims of child abuse and/or domestic violence. In a peer evaluation of my teaching, my colleague Professor Matt Hipps wrote, *“One moment that was particularly excellent is when Dr. Johnson (while discussing abusive behaviors that can lead to serial killers) she made sure that her language was not victimizing any members of the class. I thought that was a remarkable moment of attention of detail.”*

I will end with one of my favorite student evaluation comments taken from CRJU 4700 in Fall 2016, *“Dr. Johnson is completely amazing. She is by far the best professor at Dalton State. She’s always there when you need her (school related or not). Not only that but she’s so inspirational.”* I would not say I am the best, but I strive to be *my very best* every day and I do want to inspire students to be the best people they can be in life and in their careers. This is evidenced throughout the entire portfolio, as well as the quote that is attached to my email that I wholeheartedly believe in, *“Go into the world and do well. But more importantly, go into the world and do good.”* ~Minor Myers, Jr.

September 13, 2022

Letter of recommendation for Natalie Johnson:

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to express my wholehearted recommendation that Dr. Natalie Johnson be promoted to full professor. As Dr. Johnson's previous student, I was able to experience firsthand her dedication and passion for her work. When I was at Dalton State, I started my educational career in the social work department. I met Dr. Johnson by what I believe to be fate, having attended class early while she was straightening up after her lesson. The brief conversation I had with her that day changed the course of my studies, all before I knew her name.

As a Professor, Dr. Johnson not only teaches her material well, but she also speaks on each topic with passion. Dr. Johnson uses both text books and experiences to bring a better understanding of the material being taught. Because of her influence and determination to teach, I took as many of Dr. Johnson's classes that I could. I would also attend classes that were not on my course schedule to learn more from her experience in the field. Dr. Johnson taught classes that also helped me in my personal life, such as victimology and family violence. By being educated on these topics I was able to recognize that I was in an abusive relationship and leave, during which time she was there to support me.

Moreover, Dr. Johnson's teaching style, paper requirements, and study techniques were also great help to me in graduate school. I often reached out to her in grad school when I needed assistance with material, advice on ethical dilemmas, or for just a reminder of why I do what I do. Everything I learned from Dr. Johnson's classes, both personally and professionally, I still carry with me to this day. Her passion and way of teaching helped me grow as an individual and professional, and I often look back on what I learned from her so that I can better assist my patients.

In closing, I would like to reiterate my strong support for Dr. Natalie Johnson to be promoted to full professor. Dr. Johnson is a passionate, dedicated, hardworking professor. I have had many great professors during my time in college, but if it weren't for Dr. Johnson I would not be where I am today. I was a first generation college student, and I believe due to the influence of Dr. Johnson, I graduated with my Bachelors in Criminal Justice in fall of 2017.

Sincerely,



Kelsey Barnett, MS

Substance Abuse Counselor

Volunteer Comprehensive Treatment Center

Kmbarnett4610@outlook.com

Dear Felton Jenkins, Jr., Hall of Fame Faculty Award Selection Committee:

I am honored to extend my full support for Dr. Natalie Johnson as a nominee for the Felton Jenkins, Jr., Hall of Fame Faculty Award.

I am a student of Dr. Johnson and have had the pleasure of taking seven of her courses at Dalton State College (DSC). Not only is she passionate about teaching within the disciplines of criminal justice and sociology, but she genuinely cares about the students in her classroom, which is evident in her teaching style and interactions with students.

Dr. Johnson aims to create a safe, inclusive, and interesting learning environment in her classrooms. She encourages all students to ask questions, engage in class discussions, look at facts, and formulate their own opinions regarding various topics. She also encourages us to determine why we believe what we believe, which is valuable not only in learning academic material but throughout life. She enables us to think critically and deeply about our beliefs and become our own person instead of going with the status quo. She is also a champion for mental health and self-care. She asks students to complete a self-care assignment each semester and continues emphasizing self-care throughout the semester. As we all know, life is stressful, and this assignment is a way to get students to think about different forms of self-care and is also our semesterly reminder that self-care is imperative to our overall health. She routinely starts class by asking how we are and how our self-care is going. She also encourages students to ask for help if they're struggling. While she provides structured class experiences that prepare us for the professional world, she also understands that "life happens" and emphasizes that she can't help us if we don't ask. These gestures have always shown me that she genuinely cares about her students' academic development and personal well-being.

Dr. Johnson also served as my academic advisor and mentor for most of my undergraduate career, and I am grateful for her guidance. I will forever be grateful to have had a professor who cared about my academic success but also cared about me as a student. She always makes it a point to ask about things going on in our lives and is always ready to lend a helping hand if we are in need. She spends one-on-one time with her advisees, which I have always found valuable.

Dr. Johnson uses highly effective teaching strategies and fair assessment methods in her classes, and it is evident from sitting in her classroom for just five minutes that she has a passion for teaching. Her enthusiasm enhances the learning environment and the classroom experience. Dr. Johnson's goal is for all her students to do well and learn as much as possible. Dr. Johnson requires many different styles of assignments, which I believe makes the class more fun and interesting. This wide array of assignments includes various writing assignments, watching documentaries, reading articles, analyzing data, etc., and some courses include video presentations, book analyses, and other projects. Each of these aids students in developing critical thinking, writing, and communication skills. Students in some of her classes also engage in service learning, which is a rewarding experience. In her Sex Trafficking, Family Violence, and other courses, students are encouraged to volunteer with various organizations within the community that serve populations affected by the topics discussed in the course. One of my favorite assignments that I have done in her classes is journals. She teaches many tough topics, such as Labor, Organ and Sex Trafficking, Victimology, Family Violence, and more, so she

required that we write a journal entry after each class period. These required us to think deeply about the material we learned and discuss our feelings or thoughts about the information. This assignment allowed me to develop critical thinking while improving my writing skills.

Dr. Johnson also uses fair assessments for class material. Many of her exams are a mixture of short-answer and multiple-choice questions, which I have always liked. I have heard her say that she uses a combination of questions because she knows that some students feel more comfortable with one or the other, so she aims to make it fair. This semester, she has started something new called "Conversations with Dr. Johnson." This is basically an oral exam, but this terminology makes it less scary for us students. At first, I was skeptical and very nervous, but I am now a fan of this exam style. The conversation style put my nerves at ease as I could verbally explain the topics I had learned in the previous weeks. Sometimes, a written exam can be daunting; if you get stumped on a question, you're just stuck. Talking aloud allows you to work through your confusion and get to an answer that makes sense.

Dr. Johnson also provides students with many guest speakers and learning opportunities outside the classroom. She always stresses the value of having criminal justice professionals from the community speak with us about various topics related to criminal justice. This provides students with interesting perspectives and first-hand accounts of working in the field. Students in some of her classes will observe our county's Domestic Violence Accountability Court, and Drug Accountability Court, may take field trips to use the Firearms Training Simulator at the local police department, etc. These outings and guest speakers have undoubtedly enhanced my education as they reinforce the topics we discuss in the classroom.

As mentioned, I have had the pleasure of taking seven of Dr. Johnson's courses during my time at DSC. She requires students to observe our community Drug Accountability Court during her Criminology course. Before this course, I had never heard of Drug Court, but this experience helped shape what I aspire to do as a career in the criminal justice field. Observing this court piqued my interest, and Dr. Johnson helped pave the way for me to receive an internship with this agency. I have now interned with the Conasauga Drug Court Program for a year and plan to continue my education in hopes of becoming a substance abuse counselor within the criminal justice system. I've also thought of becoming a professor later in my career because of Dr. Johnson and the impact her teaching has had on me. I can comfortably say that I have learned more from Dr. Johnson than any other professor or teacher in my life.

For these reasons, I ask that you consider Dr. Natalie Johnson for the Felton Jenkins, Jr., Hall of Fame Faculty Award. No one is more deserving.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susie Coyle". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Susie Coyle