



# RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

## DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

3 October 2020

Dear Members of the Department Advisory Committee—

I write to support Dragan Gill, Assistant Professor of English, in her application for tenure and promotion to Associate Professor. I have known Dragan since fairly early on in her appointment at Rhode Island College, both in her role as Instructor and, later, when she was appointed to her current tenure-line position. As Director of Writing, I can attest to the ways in which the First Year Writing Program in particular and college-wide writing instruction in general have benefited from Dragan's strong commitment to Reference; as her mentor, I have witnessed firsthand her multi-faceted investment in the community of RIC. We are fortunate to have her at our institution.

When the Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning asked me to serve as Dragan's mentor, I of course jumped at the chance. My exact words to Dragan: "Fair warning—I'll get more out of this than you will." I was correct. A consummate researcher in her own right—curious, talented, and persistent—she has opened up the college's (and my) perspective on the library and the services it both does provide and can provide. Dragan embodies a holistic view of research and has worked to redefine the role of Reference library faculty on this campus. Our mentoring relationship over these last three years has taught me a great deal.

One of the reasons Dragan asked me to be her mentor was because she felt the wide-reaching nature of her work resembled mine in at least one critical way. As a writing program administrator (WPA), my position as a faculty administrator encompasses pedagogy, scholarship, and service. WPAs resist the wholesale classification of their administrative work as "service"; such work requires a great deal of disciplinary knowledge and expertise as well as ongoing research *and* the subsequent implementation of findings in a local institutional context (including teaching). When Dragan works with student employees, or creates meaningful library exhibits, she is teaching. When she directs the open textbook initiative at RIC and works with colleges across the state, she has made this work part of her scholarship and research (and indisputably, RIC is lucky to have her helming that project). She articulates a further example within the pages of her forthcoming *CR&RL News* article. What began as a project for a committee on which she served quickly morphed into a collaborative relationship that drew on her talents and disciplinary knowledge. Readers will also find in that article evidence of Dragan's willingness to learn—about the college programs, member organizations, and disciplinary fields of her collaborators as well as the research she needed to bring to the project. Certainly the *CR&RL* article in and of itself is a scholarly artifact, but the narrative within illustrates exactly how successfully Dragan has interwoven the traditional academic criteria of scholarship, teaching, and service.

Indeed, the FYW Program benefits from Dragan's keen talent to synthesize these criteria. The program's enduring attention to the Research Fluency General Education Outcome has



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thrived, in large part, because of the effort of our Reference library faculty. This work has spanned several years, and Dragan's early commitment laid the foundation for a Center for Research and Creative Activity "Integration" Grant in 2018—a grant that fostered more widespread Research Fluency professional development for FYW faculty. Dragan helped create the research fluency "worksheets" that many FYW sections use wholesale or have adapted for instruction as we seek to focus on two of the six Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Frameworks. Understanding the importance of outcome mapping, Dragan mapped outcomes and statements from the Council of Writing Program Administrators, ACRL, and the RIC Research Fluency rubric so as to locate areas of kinship and provide consistent messaging among and between disciplinary identities. Because of her, we felt more confident in our areas of commonality; her work crystallized our shared mission.

While she has contributed greatly to the program writ large, she has also been an indispensable instructor in individual FYW classrooms. Faculty speak glowingly of their work with Dragan and the assistance she brings to individual students during class sessions. As she notes in her narrative, Dragan creates a lab setting and works one-on-one with students; such a practice is labor-intensive yet rich in its rewards. Since working with the Reference library faculty, I have come to understand the rhetorical nature of research and how it renders impossible a one-size-fits-all approach to research fluency. Dragan's pedagogical approach embodies the iterative nature of research. Students learn not just in the moment—what needs to be done for one assignment—but how they can transfer that knowledge and practice to other tasks.

I'll close here with a final observation: in the five or so years since Dragan arrived at our campus, she has managed to become known to *everyone*. It's not coincidental that Dragan is often tapped to oversee, or direct, or manage, or collaborate on, or offer input in, or volunteer for various committees, initiatives, and projects on this campus and across the state. It seems that everyone at RIC—students, administrators, faculty, and staff—admires Dragan's talents: she is a dedicated teacher, scholar, researcher, and community member. Her value is immeasurable, and I urge the DAC to favorably recommend Dragan for tenure and promotion at Rhode Island College. We need her here.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak about my colleague and collaborator; should you wish me to expand on any of the above, please contact me via the information provided below.

Sincerely,

Becky L. Caouette 

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