

# NOMINATION PACKAGE

Nominee for 2020 CAA New Academic Advisor Award:

## SERENA CHRISTIANSON

*Academic Success Coordinator  
School of Life Sciences*



- **Nomination Letter:** Dr. Jane Maienschein ..... 2
- **Serena Christianson’s Advising Philosophy** ..... 3-4
- **Serena Christianson’s Curriculum Vitae** ..... 5-7
- **Job Description:** Academic Success Coordinator ..... 8-10

**10 February 2020**

**Nomination of Serena Christianson for Council of Academic Advisors Award – New Advisor**

I nominate Serena Christianson for the New Advisor Award through CAA. I am a faculty member in the School of Life Sciences who has had the privilege of working closely with Serena, and I enthusiastically support her nomination.

When Serena joined the School of Life Sciences as an academic advisor, she stood out from the beginning because she always wanted to understand all the requirements and options. I direct the Biology and Society major, which raises special problems because it is very much oriented toward making choices for each individual student. Each student carries out an individual research project, and they find a mentor who will work with them. This is challenging for many, and it takes an excellent advisor to help a student understand what the major entails and whether it works for him or her. Serena immediately came to talk to me to be sure she understood the goals and the special nature of the major. She became one of two go-to advisors in the larger SoLS team for our students, and she became the one to help students find internship options if that is the best approach. Ever since, she has made sure that she keeps up with any changes in our major, and also all the others in the very large unit with over 4,500 students.

Beyond just knowing the rules and being sure to apply them appropriately for each individual, Serena works with each student to be sure s/he has thought through options. She asks what they want to do after graduating, helps each student find a positive path, helps decide whether our accelerate BS/MS program might be appropriate, and she works closely with me about any questions or judgment calls so that we can work them through together.

For example, one student was struggling with her courses but was fixated on following the path she had laid out for herself. Serena brought her to my office, and together we all worked through the several options available to her. Serena guided her to understand that she could make wiser choices and be happier and feel less stressed as a result. For other students with demanding parents, Serena helps them discover how to become themselves and listen to their own needs, while also being respectful of family and faculty.

Recently, Serena has been working with more honors students who are looking for options to challenge them. She connects them with our Biology and Society major and with our students. I am impressed by her care for each one, helping them all find the right paths forward. Her approach takes considerably more effort than standard advising following standard checklists. I admire her creativity and support for each individual.

I have had the privilege to work with Serena on larger and smaller issues, on curriculum and with individual students, and in working through problems and helping identify students for special opportunities. I absolutely trust her and consider her my guide in advising students on academic matters. She works with a wonderful team in SoLS, and she is a leader there. She deserves recognition for her excellent contributions. I recommend her enthusiastically.

Sincerely,



Jane Maienschein, PhD

University Professor, Regents' Professor, and President's Professor  
Director, Center for Biology and Society



# ADVISING PHILOSOPHY

From my observations, no “traditional” way to become an academic advisor exists; this is not a career path kindergartners proclaim they want to follow when they grow up. Rather, individuals become academic advisors because they feel a calling to higher education, a desire to assist students’ navigation and interpretation of the collegiate experience. My first taste of academic advising occurred when I was an Assistant Professor of Business at Williston State College (ND). Part of my responsibility as a full-time professor was acting as the sole advisor for the business management program. This experience, coupled with my time as a fitness instructor and dance teacher, helped me realize that my underlying approach to advising is anchored in the “platinum rule,”

## **“TREAT OTHERS THE WAY THEY WANT TO BE TREATED.”**

This concept is easily digestible in theory: every student brings his or her own conceptions, beliefs, desires to the college experience; thus, it is critical to honor his or her individuality and provide appropriate resources as needed. However, this “platinum rule” sometimes falls short in practice because

## **STUDENTS DON’T KNOW WHAT THEY DON’T KNOW.**

In my professional history of corporate marketing, entrepreneurship, arts administration, and education, this naivete is incredibly common. Thus, my academic advising philosophy is grounded in servant leadership: putting the students first, removing my own ambitions and beliefs and simply facilitating and encouraging the students toward their desired and most optimal selves. As Greenleaf (2002) stated, “Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous?” I see our duty as academic advisors as much more than reviewing a degree checklist. In the spirit of the “platinum rule” and servant leadership, the following qualities are necessary for effective and impactful advising:

- **Balancing treating each student as an individual but being equitable with the distribution of resources:** Part of being a good advisor focuses on meeting a student where they are in life. It is easy to fall prey to viewing each student as another ID number, instead of a vulnerable package of emotions, wants, fears, beliefs, doubts, and much more. Each person needs to be treated with the respect they deserve, but we advisors need to acknowledge that students’ needs and priorities can and will vary. With this in mind, the art of advising is hearing the student’s explicit requests and anticipating what the student did not even realize they wanted to, needed, or should know. Distribution of resources should not only occur on demand; instead, I commit to being thorough with the presentation of resources and mindful of the medium they would like to receive them in. However, I do not believe my job is to hand-feed everything to the student; I see my role as a facilitator, simplifying and clarifying the process for them, eventually helping them improve their own self-efficacy and autonomy.
- **Encouraging the student to explore and play:** The purpose of higher education is to prepare a student for their career, which is a journey one embarks on, not something one “has” (Reardon, Lenz, Peterson, & Sampson, 2019). College is a time to feed one’s curiosity, to push one’s boundaries of what they enjoy and dislike, uncovering hidden interests and talents through discovery. This process leads students to find their ideal occupations that align with their interests and abilities. *(Continued on next page)*

- **Sharing honest and helpful feedback, regardless of my opinions:** As students embark on this exploration process, my job as an advisor is to provide a realistic preview of their career aspirations. My job is not to convince or dissuade someone from pursuing a certain pathway. However, my responsibility is to treat the student with respect and share the expectations as well as the viability of said intended career path. Whatever the student decides, my role as an academic advisor is to provide all the resources available to attempt whatever the goal may be, regardless of its likelihood.
- **Providing a safe space for vulnerability and self-reflection:** whether it be a conversation surrounding the importance of general education courses or how to get involved in student organizations, my goal is to provide a space where students feel comfortable discussing any concerns relating to their senses of self. Oftentimes, students' metacognitions create many barriers for growth, and I commit to being an advisor with whom students can have honest conversations, no matter the topic at hand.
- **Modeling authenticity, independence, humility, resiliency, and professionalism:** Echoing Bandura's (1986) commentary on the importance of observation and modeling others, I strive to be an advisor students can emulate. I do my best to display my enthusiastic personality, showing students the importance of authenticity. When appropriate, I openly share my own pitfalls and trials in my life, demonstrating that we are all human and no one is perfect. We advisors might be the only constant the student has in their college experience: seeing someone who embodies what resiliency and professionalism look like is critical for the students' growth.

Ultimately, I want the students to enjoy their time in college, experiencing as much as they want to and exceeding their own and others' expectations for what is possible. I strive to be effective in the art of academic advising, using my interpersonal and written communication skills to build rapport with students. Also, I strive to be effective in the science of advising by committing to explore differing perspectives, new resources, possible career pathways, relevant academic policies and nuances, communication techniques, and other skills to enhance my craft.

**ACADEMIC ADVISING IS AN ART AND SCIENCE: BY TREATING STUDENTS THE WAY THEY WANT TO BE TREATED AND PROCEEDING WITH THE PERSPECTIVE THAT STUDENTS SIMPLY DO NOT KNOW WHAT THEY DO NOT KNOW, I CAN GUIDE STUDENTS AS THEY "BECOME HEALTHIER, WISER, FREER, MORE AUTONOMOUS" THROUGHOUT THEIR COLLEGIATE JOURNEYS.**

References:

- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social-cognitive theory*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Greenleaf, R. K. (2002). *Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power & greatness*. New Jersey: Paulist Press
- Reardon, R. C., Lenz, J. G., Peterson, G. W., & Sampson, J. P. (2019). *Career development & planning: A comprehensive approach. Instructor's manual (6th ed.)*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt.

# SERENA L. CHRISTIANSON

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## EDUCATION

### Doctorate of Education

Expected May 2021

Emphasis: *Leadership and Innovation*, currently 4.0/4.0 GPA

Arizona State University | Glendale, Arizona

- Dissertation topic: *Using an Online Career Development Course to Prepare Life Science Students for Career Decision Making*

### Master of Business Administration

May 2012

Emphasis: *Leadership*, 3.97/4.0 GPA

Grand Canyon University | Phoenix, Arizona

### Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration and Communication

May 2010

Minor: *Character in Leadership*, 3.96/4.0 GPA

University of Jamestown | Jamestown, North Dakota

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## RELEVANT PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

### Academic Success Coordinator and Career/Internships Lead

March 2017 to Present

Arizona State University - School of Life Sciences | Tempe, Arizona

*Tasked with balancing academic advising responsibilities for the School of Life Sciences undergraduate programs with developing career and internship opportunities through business development and event planning activities.*

Provide academic support for School of Life Sciences (SoLS) through appropriate advisement of course selection, extracurricular involvement, and career planning activities (current approximate ratio is ~700 students per advisor; our office does not have assigned caseloads yet). Collaborate with academic units and student service divisions to unveil career and internship opportunities for life science students. Research possible career paths through academic program choices (major and minor selections). Research, develop and maintain relationships with companies/organizations for broader career/internship avenues for students. Teach school's internship course. Former editor of bi-weekly undergraduate advising newsletter.

### *Project Coordinating Achievements in addition to roles as an Academic Advisor:*

#### *Career and Internships:*

- Organized largest career fair in SoLS' history with 80.95% increase in employer registration (at 100% capacity level reached) and 75% increase in student participation two consecutive years (2017, 2018)
- Implemented student-centric events to increase exposure to various career options in innovative ways, including Arizona State University's first-ever sponsored event to involve alcohol, "Science of Wine," highlighting how to apply life science education in the wine industry
- Led department support of Handshake job platform through strengthening of relationship between SoLS' undergraduate advising and Career and Professional Development Services
- Created large poster highlighting various career options for life science students based on SoLS alumni's reports, which is now used regularly in promotional materials and advising sessions
- Led transition of SoLS' internship course to Canvas learning platform, implementing a 100% paperless course in partnership with the department's digital support team
- Expanded SoLS' internship course to accept opportunities outside of traditional life sciences careers to reflect changing nature of life science industries

### ***Undergraduate Communications:***

- Redesigned streamlined functionality and data-collecting newsletter through MailChimp based off of student feedback from survey results in May 2017
- Created large poster highlighting various career options for life science students based on SOLS alumni's reports
- Managed website updates/edits per staff's request
- Worked with SOLS' VisLab (Graphic Design team) to create quarter-sheet fliers for walk-in advising promotions as well as any career-related event
- Collaborated with front desk staff on improving our advising page, including the addition of a Google Calendar to properly display our operating times
- Video-recorded all career-related events for ASU Online accessibility
- Created template messaging for out-of-office messaging for staff to use to be consistent in our communication
- Updated content on "Course Requirements" page on SOLS website, serving as a resource for students and advisors
- Organized survey to determine when students preferred to see an advisor, which helped all of the advisors adjust their schedule to better meet their needs/requests

### **Courses Taught:**

- *BIO/HPS/MBB/MIC/PLB 484: School of Life Sciences Internship*
  - Summer 2017, Fall 2017, Spring 2018, Summer 2018, Fall 2018, Spring 2019, Summer 2020, Fall 2019, Spring 2020
- *BIO 394: Career and Professional Development for Life Sciences*
  - Fall 2019, Spring 2020

### **Event Planning:**

- November 2017, 2018: *Life Science and Molecular Science Career Fair*
- February 2018: *SOLSmates* (an expo for students to meet with faculty in SoLS' concentration areas)
- March 2018: *Career Panel Discussion with AZBio*
- April 2018: *Science of Wine*
- September 2018: *Pizza and Global Possibilities* (in partnership with Study Abroad Office)
- October 2018: *Science of Beer*
- February 2019: *Science of Business* (in partnership with W. P. Carey School of Business)
- March 2019: *Life Sciences Career Exploration Workshop*
- October 2019: *Science of Naturopathic Medicine* (partnership with Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine)
- November 2019: *Science of Business* (partnership with W. P. Carey School of Business)
- Coming February 2020: *Natural Sciences Career Fair*
- Coming March 2020: *Science of Making an Impact* (in partnership with Peace Corps at ASU)

### **Campus Involvement:**

- Council of Academic Advisors
- National Academic Advising Association
- Pre-Health Advisory Committee
- College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) Futures Collective – Partnerships Committee
- Co-Staff Advisor for ASU Rotaract (collegiate club of Rotary International)

## Program Coordinator and Assistant Professor of Business

July 2011 – July 2014

Williston State College | Williston, North Dakota

*Simultaneously managed administrative and instructional responsibilities within Business Management Program of public, two-year community college.*

Full-time instructor of Business Management courses. Provided individual academic and career advising for over 100 students each semester for both the Business Management and Administrative Assistant Programs. Maintained and expanded face-to-face and online faculty offerings. Collaboratively planned, designed, developed and revised for-credit online courses and course materials to meet the College's standards. Remained current on and evaluated emerging technologies that had potential value for teaching and learning (classroom, online, hybrid). Scheduled and assigned courses to adjunct instructors in multiple formats (online, classroom, hybrid). Utilized software such as web page development, desktop publishing, image editing and presentation tools to develop custom products to meet the needs of students and instructors. Collected data from current students and alumni to assist in curriculum development, reporting, and recruitment.

### **Key Achievements:**

- Spearheaded development of institution's first bachelor program (Bachelor of Applied Science in Applied Management) through analysis of career and employment data, web-based career resources, and databases
- Championed full-scale revamp of curricula for business management and administrative assistant programs to provide students with tools to succeed in current business climate.
- Acted as business program's sole advisor for its 100+ students (out of ~800 university enrollment) and as Co-Advisor for BizTech.org, on-campus student business association.

### Courses Taught:

- Advertising I
- Advertising II
- Business Communication
- Business Ethics
- Consumer Behavior
- Cooperative Education/Internship
- Event Planning
- International Business
- Introduction to Hospitality Management
- Leadership Techniques
- Principles of Management
- Principles of Marketing
- Service Learning

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## PRESENTATIONS

Christianson, Serena (2019). "How a Stranger to STEM Used Wine to Change Students' Career Perceptions."

Lecture presented for All CAA (Council of Academic Advisors) Best Practices Conference. Tempe, Arizona.

Christianson, Serena (2019). "Exploring Life Science Careers." Lecture presented for BioSci Southwest Symposium at Arizona State University. Tempe, Arizona.

Christianson, Serena (2019). "Exploring Life Science Careers." Lecture presented for STEAM Day at Phoenix College. Phoenix, Arizona.

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## RELEVANT SKILLS

- Adobe Acrobat Reader
- AdvisorTrac
- ASU Analytics
- Blackboard
- Canvas
- DARS
- DocuSign
- Drupal (website management)
- Google Suite: Docs, Drive, Forms, Slides, Sheets
- Handshake
- Mailchimp
- Microsoft Office: Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, Word
- PeopleSoft
- Qualtrics
- Salesforce
- Skype; Skype for Business
- Slack
- Zoom



**Job Posting Preview**

**Academic Success Coordinator**  
29451BR  
Campus: Tempe  
Academic Success Coordinator

The listing of responsibilities and the percentages of time spent in each area of responsibility are highlighted

**Job Description**

Reports to a manager, chair, or director under general supervision, plans, organizes and coordinates academic advising activities with the purpose of promoting academic standards and student success in meeting these standards to ensure retention of students in the university.

**Job Family**

Advising & Admissions

**Department Name**

Sols Undergraduate Programs

**Full-Time/Part-Time**

Full-Time

**VP Code**

EXEC VP/PROVOST

**Scope of Search**

Open

**Grant Funded Position**

This is not a grant funded position and is not contingent on future grant funding.

**Salary Range**

\$39,744 - \$45,000 per year; DOE

**Close Date**

08-February-2017

**Category**

02

**Essential Duties**

- Leads academic success staff in the provision of academic advising/coaching, career and resume coaching, program functions for students to ensure needs of students are met for successful completion of program of study.
- Provides academic advising and career coaching and/or interacts with students in support of academic success regularly, but no less than 50% of time.
- Oversees and coordinates annual Career and Internship Fair, involving 30 plus science organizations and close to 500 students directed to the retention and success of the student population.
- Directs and develops internship program; securing new opportunities and advertising these via newsletter and website. Works closely and collaboratively with manager, chair,

or director and university administrators to implement policies and practices in support of college, department, and university goals.

- Acts as a team leader or senior resource for professional and/or support staff; may supervise students and/or staff as requested/needed.
- Supervises/supports Academic Success Specialist assist students identify all academic options including, but not limited to: degrees, extracurricular activities, study abroad program(s), research, and internships; supports and provides counsel to student in selection of options best suited to student's goals, interests and skills.
- Utilizing eAdvisor, assists students explore a variety of academic options, register for courses and make timely progress towards completion of degree.
- Assists in development of academic advising policy
- Monitors student academic progress and program effectiveness through a variety of reporting tools including eAdvisor; works closely and collaboratively with students, faculty, and staff and external groups on issues related to academic success.
- Acts as a college/department liaison to current and prospective students, faculty, staff and external groups on issues related to academic success
- Responds to student questions and concerns; works with students to resolve all issues to ensure ongoing satisfaction with program and successful progress to completion
- Works collaboratively with academic units and services throughout the university to facilitate comprehensive student support
- Utilizes a variety of university data and programmatic direction to promote student academic success.

### Minimum Qualifications

Master's degree AND one year previous experience in one or more of the following: advising, student recruitment/retention or related student services utilizing a proactive and innovative approach which results in demonstrated outcomes in retention, graduation, and academic planning; OR, Any equivalent combination of experience and/or education from which comparable knowledge, skills and abilities have been achieved.

### Desired Qualifications

- Evidence of a Master's degree in Career Counseling, Higher Ed, or Science education, or Communications or closely related field.
- Evidence of directing and encouraging students to achieve academic and career success through a life coaching approach.
- Demonstrated knowledge of career paths in Life Sciences.
- Experience with academic advising/coaching, coordinating events, resume workshops, internship programs, and developing relationships with employers in the science fields.
- Experience with PeopleSoft, Advisor trac, and DARS evaluation a plus.
- Demonstrated knowledge of principles, practices, procedures and methods of evidence-based academic advising strategies
- Demonstrated Knowledge of ASU academic structure and organization
- Demonstrated knowledge of academic programs, colleges, and departments university-wide

- Demonstrated knowledge of the principles, practices, methods and techniques of supervision
- Experience in student service orientation
- Evidence of leadership behaviors and abilities
- Experience in rapidly adapt and effectively utilize new technology, practices, policies and methods
- Experience in establishing and maintaining effective working relationships with peers, faculty, students, administration and other interested parties
- Experience in working effectively in an environment subject to quickly changing priorities
- Experience in interpreting student needs and determine when referral to other University resources is appropriate
- Experience in demonstrating sensitivity to needs of a diverse student populations
- Experience in designing presentation materials and giving oral presentations in group settings.
- Experience in using internet-based research tools and Microsoft Office computer applications.

#### Working Environment

Activities are performed in an environmentally controlled office setting subject to extended periods of sitting, keyboarding, and manipulating a computer mouse (75%); required to stand for varying lengths of time and walk moderate distances to perform work (10%). Frequent bending, reaching, lifting, pushing and pulling up to 25 pounds (15%). Regular activities require ability to quickly change priorities which may include and/or are subject to resolution of conflicts. Ability to clearly communicate verbally, read, write, see, and hear to perform essential functions.

#### Department Statement

The School of Life Sciences (SOLS) has provided a vital hub for creative excellence at Arizona State University, with more than 670 faculty, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows and staff, and research that ranges from studies on biodiesel and biohydrogen to vaccine development and the conservation of whales. As ASU's first academic unit to fully reflect President Michael Crow's integrated, interdisciplinary vision for the New American University, the School of Life Sciences offers active and evolving platforms for collaborative, cutting-edge research and faculty whose discovery is freed from traditional institutional boundaries.

#### ASU Statement

Arizona State University is a new model for American higher education, an unprecedented combination of academic excellence, entrepreneurial energy and broad access. This New American University is a single, unified institution comprising four differentiated campuses positively impacting the economic, social, cultural and environmental health of the communities it serves. Its research is inspired by real world application blurring the boundaries that traditionally separate academic disciplines. ASU serves more than 90,000 students in metropolitan Phoenix, Arizona, the nation's fifth largest city. ASU champions intellectual and cultural diversity, and welcomes students from all fifty states and more than one hundred nations across the globe.

ASU is a tobacco-free university. For details visit [www.asu.edu/tobaccofree](http://www.asu.edu/tobaccofree)

AmeriCorps, Peace Corps, and other national service alumni are encouraged to apply.

Arizona State University is a VEVRAA Federal Contractor and an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer. All qualified applicants will be considered without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, protected veteran status, or any other basis protected by law.

#### Employment Verification Statement

ASU conducts pre-employment screening which may include verification of work history, academic credentials, licenses, and certifications.

#### Background Check Statement

ASU conducts pre-employment screening for all positions which includes a criminal background check, verification of work history, academic credentials, licenses, and certifications. Employment is contingent upon successful passing of the background check.

#### Instructions to Apply

Application deadline is 3:00PM Arizona time on the date indicated.

Please include all employment information in month/year format (e.g., 6/88 to 8/94), job title, job duties and name of employer for each position.

Resume should clearly illustrate how prior knowledge and experience meets the Minimum and Desired qualifications of this position.

ASU does not pay for travel expenses associated with interviews, unless otherwise indicated.

Only electronic applications are accepted for this position.

[Close preview](#)