Along life’s path, we sometimes are blessed with memorable gifts. Dr. Marge Maxwell was generously dropped into my journey at a critical juncture, and is a person in which these words will do little justice. Her impact on my life has been immeasurable. Dr. Maxwell is the reason I have the terminal doctoral degree. Dr. Maxwell is the reason I am a better teacher. Dr. Maxwell is the reason I am a better person.

As a student looking back on formative and memorable experiences, you remember the teachers who were “tough but cared.” These simple words should hang over Dr. Maxwell’s office door. On any given conversation, she will push the excellence envelope and suddenly take a student from the mediocre to the extraordinary. And, in the next breath, she will ask about family, work and jobs.

I am such a fan of Dr. Maxwell that I followed her from being a student in graduate coursework to working alongside her in this coursework as an adjunct professor. We have made perfect research partners in that I am in the field as a practicing educator and she is putting the action research to work in her coursework. I have not had a professor who is so willing and eager to adapt the content and align with actual practice in the field, and then want to share this content with the world. In my estimation, she epitomizes the WKU motto of being “A Leading University with International Reach.”

In the Fall of 2008, I was lucky enough to be accepted into the first cohort group of the Educational Leadership Doctoral program at WKU. Unsure about navigating the dissertation waters, I sought out Dr. Maxwell for her guidance. Not only did she agree to shepherd me through as chair, but she did so in just three years’ time! Dr. Maxwell kept me on track with appropriate and aggressive scheduling deadlines. She never missed a meeting we scheduled, and made herself available to me when I needed help. Consequently, I am proud to say that I was the first graduate of WKU’s Doctoral program. And, she didn’t stop there. Dr. Maxwell nominated me for the John D. Minton Graduate School award and advocated for me to receive it upon my graduation.

Throughout the dissertation process, Dr. Maxwell pushed me to refine my research question and helped me network among current professionals to find the most relevant and current work. And, as I wrote, she simply would not accept mediocrity. As a student, I can confidently say I productively struggled through the process. And, when we can get students to productively struggle, we typically get them to learn a concept for life. My research is now a part of me, and my professional life.
Our partnership has extended beyond the dissertation. In her spirit of professional prodding, we have looked at ways to increase higher-level thinking that is relevant and includes appropriate technology integration. Dr. Maxwell has developed the CReaTE framework and I have been happy to help field test the concepts and infuse them into graduate coursework. Additionally, we have been able to present this work to multiple school districts as well as the SITE conference in 2011.

When I became eligible to teach alongside her in the Library Media Education courses, her support of me as an adjunct professor was amazing. We partnered on the content changes, discussed how to implement, and she followed up with me multiple times throughout the semesters. Questions I had were answered within hours of my asking them. Her responsiveness and her true concern for overall program integrity is unmatched.

Dr. Maxwell and I have had the pleasure of affecting many teachers’ classrooms through our graduate courses. Our evaluations typically reference the utility of the course: teachers can really use the projects they create in their professional practice. And, I can attest to its rigor. Dr. Maxwell demands standards-rich content and expects high-level work. In my 17 years of professional practice, I have not seen any other professor publish modular units of study that even compare to her level of detail and expectation.

In a small way, I felt compelled to honor Dr. Maxwell for her work with me throughout my professional journey as well as her undying commitment to all her students. Thankfully WKU validated my sentiment by awarding her the College of Education and Behavioral Science’s Adviser of the Year award in 2011.

And now, it is time for another professional step for Dr. Maxwell. There is no better candidate for full professorship. Her absolute passion for excellence coupled with her caring spirit makes her a perfect fit for what WKU embodies. Awarding this distinction validates her work, and more importantly solidifies her legacy that must be shared for years to come. I implore you to give Dr. Maxwell your highest consideration.

Thank you for the opportunity to write this letter. Dr. Maxwell has made me the person I am today. Please give her the chance to replicate this experience many times over at WKU.

“A good head and a good heart are a formidable combination.” – Nelson Mandela

Sincerely,

Matthew Constant, Ed.D.
Adjunct Professor. WKU
Assistant Superintendent, Owensboro Public Schools

OUR VISION: Making Owensboro a better place one student at a time
Equal Education and Employment Opportunities M/F/D