

ACADEMIC ADVISOR SPOTLIGHT

RAEHEL BLAKENEY, LAUREN SANBORN AND SUSAN VINSON



“Teamwork has always been evident in our office, but during this pandemic, I have seen the epitome of teamwork in action,” says Donna Watson, Director of Student Services and Advisement in the Gamecock EdQuarters office. That is just one of the many complimentary quotes shared about Raechel Blakeney, Lauren Sanborn and Susan Vinson, who are affectionately known as the “dream team” of the College of Education in the GamecocksEdQuarters Office.



Raechel Blakeney, Student Services Program Coordinator, is the front-line point of contact for students, faculty, staff, and prospective students' communication with GamecockEdQuarters. In addition to providing support for undergraduate advisement, orientation, and overall office operations she also coordinates and tracks the progress of students in teacher licensure programs outside the College and communicates status with students and faculty program coordinators. She has been working in the COE for almost 5 years and has made quite an impact in that time on both students and faculty and staff. Lisa Peterson, COE Director of Assessment and Accreditation, says “Raechel Blakeney is undeniably one of the most helpful staff members that I have had the opportunity to work with at UofSC. I know if I ever have a question regarding student affairs or even an issue with technology, she will go out of her way to find a quick answer for me and volunteer her time to help. She always goes the extra mile in assisting students and others in the college, spreading positivity along the way. It is obvious she loves what she does each day and the COE family is lucky to have her as one of our own!” Adding to that, Brittany Bailey who is a junior in the early education major, “Being a transfer student in 2018, she helped me transfer smoothly and was someone who made UofSC feel just like home. She goes above and beyond and makes it known she is more than happy to help while doing it with a kind heart and smile on her face. She is one of a kind and I know if I ever need anything I can count on her to help. It is more than obvious she loves her job and she takes that extra step in showing it!”



Another key member of the COE advising team, **Lauren Sanborn**, has been with the college for over ten years and currently serves as the Associate Director of Undergraduate Student Services. In addition to advising students, she coordinates advising practices, specifically providing guidance to COE advisors in regard to advising technology utilization. Lauren also coordinates the field experience clearance process for students and serves as the Certification Officer for students' teaching certification/licensure. Natalie Lewis, a senior middle-level education major says that Lauren, “has been everything I've needed and more throughout my four years at the university. She has consistently gone above & beyond to make sure I am taken care of and feel supported. From the beginning, she has made me feel comfortable enough to be able to call her with any question, concern, or just to chat. I am forever grateful for her and overjoyed that I had the privilege of having her as my advisor!” Rob Dedmon, COE Assistant Dean for Enrollment Management and Academic Program Development shared that, “Lauren is a dedicated and highly effective advisor. She goes above and beyond in efforts to personalize advisement, so students feel welcomed and supported.”



Rounding out the “dream team”, is **Susan Vinson** an Academic Advisor who not only has fifteen years' experience in higher education, but also served as a secondary classroom teacher. Susan was part of the first group of First-Year Advisors hired by the University Advising Center in spring 2015 and has since moved into a role advising new and continuing Education students. Dr. Bridget Miller, Program Coordinator for Early Childhood Education says that Susan, “is an amazing colleague. She has a passion for working with students and develops strong relationships among the students she works with. The students and faculty know that she will fight hard and put in the extra work to do what's best for students.” Alexis Thornton, a junior Physical Education major, says she was nervous when she switched majors from Exercise Science to Physical Education and worried about the transition. “Mrs. Vinson showed me that it was going to be okay and that I would make plenty of friends in my new major. She immediately helped me with building my schedule and creating multiple pathways for me to choose from for my graduation pathway.”



It is no secret that the advisors in the Gamecock EdQuarters office have a true passion for their jobs. Dr. Chris Burkett, Executive Director of Gamecock EdQuarters echoes that statement by sharing that, “The undergraduate advising team is the embodiment of collaborative professionals who work alongside of both students and faculty to ensure that everyone involved has the highest level of exemplary service and support.”



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