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Dear Bynum Mentor Selection Committee:

I met Chris Maroldo during the fall semester of 2008. After taking off from school for three years, I decided that it was time for me to finish. In order to get properly acclimated into the university, I had to complete the STAR program (Students Taking Academic Responsibility). At that point, my grade point average (GPA) was a horrific 1.6. I came to Chris's office extremely discouraged, angry, hopeless and frustrated. I was a very unhappy student and had experienced many life obstacles that were the culprits of my pessimistic demeanor. Although I wanted to graduate from college, it seemed as if it was a never-ending tunnel with no sight of light. Chris immediately sympathized with my disposition and began to lay out a diagram of how to navigate through my deep, dark tunnel. From day one, Chris was able to reach me in a manner that no other mentor has done before. He accomplished this by being sympathetic, honest, wise, encouraging, consistent and resourceful.

After I poured my heart and soul out to Chris explaining all of the unfortunate mishaps on my transcript and many gaps in my education, Chris consoled me by telling me that it was okay to be angry. He taught me that anger is a secondary emotion and that it was imperative I find the primary source of my anger. I learned that I was angry about my past failures and my lack of motivation to succeed. Chris advised me that my past does not have to define my future. He was always honest in advising me that there was nothing I could do about my ugly transcript but forgive myself and improve it. He thoroughly went through my transcript with me and told me what classes were beneficial to retake and which classes to take in the future. He then gave personal accounts of his struggles as an undergraduate student. It was very inspirational to see someone who also struggled and were able to overcome and succeed. From day one, I had not only met a STAR Advisor, I also met a friend.

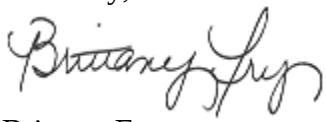
I was required to meet with Chris once a week. Even after I had completed the STAR program, Chris was still available and willing to assist me. To this day, I meet with Chris on a regular basis for encouragement and advice. During the program, Chris not only helped me with my academic career, he gave me many valuable life skills. He explained how important it was for me to gain control over my personal life. He believed that once I eliminated unnecessary stressors, I would undoubtedly succeed. Chris always believed that I had abundant potential and the ability to advance. He was able to see this in the midst of my 1.6 GPA although I felt I was worthless. Chris was convinced that once I took ownership of my life, prioritized my responsibilities, took care of my emotional health and became more consistent in my everyday activities, school would line up accordingly. This stands to be true as I heeded to Chris's advice and finished this past fall semester of 2010 with a 3.4 GPA.

Chris taught me that it isn't what happens in life that matters the most, but how we choose to deal with them. He is full of encouraging sociological theories that he shares with his students to help them find better paths in life and ultimately make better decisions. Chris is extremely focused on ensuring his students are well-equipped with advice and wisdom to tackle school from both a personal and academic perspective. Chris sends me inspirational articles on a regular basis to keep my hope alive. I look back at e-mails dating from 2008 and they include, "How are you doing this semester," "Just checking in with you," "Here's an article on procrastination," and "Check out these scholarship opportunities." Knowing that Chris was genuinely concerned about my success gave me reason to believe that I could be a success story. Chris taught me how to change my negative mindset about my self-efficacy. Once I started to believe that I could succeed, it manifested itself into many facets of my life. I began to excel in my personal life, career and education.

As an independent, full-time working student who was an emancipated ward of the state, I didn't have much of a support system. Chris became one of the most influential models in my life. His positive views of me and sincere desire to help, gave me encouragement when no one else did. No matter how long it took me to improve my overall GPA, Chris never lost faith and never gave up on me. Looking back at fall of 2008, I would have never imagined that I could raise my overall GPA over a 2.0 (a difficult task with over 100 plus credit hours). I honestly did not think it was physically possible for me to enhance my GPA and have graduation in sight. I attribute much of my victory to Chris. When I was not strong, Chris was my rock; when I wanted to give up, Chris was my hope; when I lost all faith, Chris was my role model; and when I couldn't see the light at the end of my tunnel, Chris taught me how to find the light switch.

I have gained a phenomenal student-mentor relationship with Chris. He has helped me schedule my courses, calculate my GPA, has been a reference for job interviews, taught me how to professionally market myself, counsels me through my mid-semester break downs, and is always available to assist me with whatever issues I present him. Chris has never said no to me or that he could not help. He has literally gone over and beyond the call of duty in order to get me on the right path. Chris will forever remain a positive figure in my life. It is because of him I am overwhelmed with confidence, motivation, the desire to succeed and the ability to be a part of the graduation ceremony in December of 2011. I give him my upmost gratitude because he is simply an amazing, humble, incredible human being. There is no other advisor that I would recommend more for this prestigious award out of the five years I have been a college student. Chris deserves to be honored for his monumental impacts in my life and many others. He has truly been a blessing in my life and I am thankful for having the opportunity to meet him and be inspired by his passion.

Sincerely,



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