

2023 FACULTY ADVOCATE ELECTION



Holly Riffe

Current NKU Position (including department and college)

Professor, Social Work and Director, Social Justice Studies
School of Social Work. College of Health and Human Services

Biographical Statement

Most of my research, practice, and teaching career has been dedicated to trying to understand *the why* and *the how* of our belief systems and coping techniques and the relationships to our behaviors. I collaborated with colleagues in post-apartheid South Africa to understand *why* folks weren't using prevention techniques to stop HIV/AIDS. Nearly all of the reasons people cited for not using HIV protection at first seemed, to an American, a bit wonky. That is, until we put those views into context. The myth that the "government was sending condoms to give folks the virus" seemed illogical, until we understood that the condoms were shipped across a very hot country in an unrefrigerated truck. This shipping method inevitably led to the condoms becoming brittle and breaking nearly immediately upon distribution. These events only have to happen once to fully break faith in our systems – such events serve to connect a nebulous *how* to actual behaviors. In spite of this fragile balance of trust and community, it gives me hope that humans around the globe persist under incredibly dire circumstances.

My teaching centers on those very same themes of *how* and *why*, and the resulting behaviors. My ethics classes empower students to understand that it is because of our values and ethical codes that we can have faith in our clinicians. Compassion, empathy, and forgiveness classes teach that we can develop a profound understanding of those around us. With that knowledge, we can see that people's behavior isn't always crazy—it's quite possibly the most rational response to a misguided and insane system of *how* and *why*. This directly applies to our current situation at NKU – how can we move forward as a supportive community and take care of one another?

Why I want to serve as Faculty Advocate (350-word maximum)

I was nominated for faculty advocate for the same reason that I would like to serve: *because I think we can do better*. Over the last year, as a member of the Professional Concerns Committee, I reviewed policies and strengthened our role in faculty governance. For example, we have passed a position statement on Academic Partnerships, worked with TEEC to ensure that faculty can remove hostile student comments from evaluations, recommended handbook revisions to protect tenure track faculty, and spent untold hours discussing the current financial abyss. And we have much more work to do both on the policy level *and* for individual faculty and staff.

I want administrators and board members to view faculty as potential allies with great experience, knowledge, and deep ties to our community. I believe that a strong advocate can collaborate with administration and the board of regents, while also being in the room and advocating for faculty individually and collectively.

I am at NKU today because one chemistry professor, who I did not personally know, lobbied on my behalf when a new administrator wanted to get rid of the last hired faculty—me. On the PCC committee and in faculty senate, I see our NKU faculty, building a new direction to lead us forward while trying to repair our collective damage. It is my hope that through this advocate role, I can continue to contribute with small gestures to more substantive policy changes in collaboration with the entire campus community will lead us back to that sparkle of hope that has been NKU.

Webpage (an optional link to a webpage maintained by the candidate)