



The University of Vermont

President's *Our Common Ground* Award 2014

Annie M. Cressey

May 5, 2014

I have the honor of speaking about an incredible woman that I work with every day. She is someone who inspires me with her ideas, creativity, passion, and endless energy. She is someone who challenges me to be thoughtful, reflective, and to be my most authentic self. She is fun, funny, diligent, dedicated, and honestly, utterly delightful. She absolutely epitomizes the values outlined in *Our Common Ground*. She is a role model for me, and I believe, for us all. She is Annie Cressey.

Annie has worked for the University of Vermont for 10 years, but it somehow seems unfair to quantify it this way. I want to liken it, (in the most respectful way possible of course) to dog years. You know, how one year in a human's life is reputed to be seven years in a dog's life? Well that's what it's like to work with Annie. While I am chugging along in my normal year – and feeling pretty good about it, Annie seems to be involved with seven times the projects, seven times the programs, seven times the organizations, and somehow she finds seven times the number of hours in a day! She is truly amazing.

While I could never name everything that Annie has accomplished, contributed, or brought to this campus, I would like to highlight a few of the reasons I was inspired to nominate her for the *Our Common Ground* Award. For this I will be borrowing from various nomination letters written for and about her.

Annie has dedicated much of her professional life to promoting mental health – addressing difficult topics such as depression, anxiety, body image, eating disorders, and suicide prevention. Her work here comes from a passionate place – one which requires patience, courage, and determination. Her commitment to raising awareness, decreasing stigma, and supporting stu-

dents has taught hundreds of us to question our deeply ingrained assumptions about students with mental health conditions, as well as to be active advocates for those who may not be able to advocate for themselves.

One of Annie's greatest gifts is her ability to connect and relate to others. To say that she is a people person is an understatement. She naturally builds relationships – everywhere she goes, and through these connections, shatters myths and brings mental health out of the shadows and into our daily conversations. She does not simply teach, she engages and grapples with complex issues, openly learning from others. If you have had the honor of meeting Annie, you know that her beliefs and values hold true, that we are all “personally and collectively responsible for our words and deeds.” She helps remind us that those words and deeds either support, or undermine, our students.

Annie's work with the two student organizations demonstrates the ripple effect of having strong support and positive modeling. Annie currently advises Active Minds, and co-advises the Black Student Union here at UVM. Both organizations have developed and implemented programs that have created an impact that can be felt throughout UVM and into the community. As Annie has also won Advisor of the year, I think that the students agree that it's a result of her support and investment that they are as successful as they are. Annie is well loved by the very best of students that UVM has to offer. This speaks to her loving nature and professional commitment more than anything.

I firmly believe that Annie Cressey lives and breathes the six values of Our Common Ground. She impacts me and the way I view the world. Her connection with students is unparalleled as evidenced by the growth of programs under her advisement. Students feel supported and empowered, and are closer to reaching their potential as a result of their connection to her. She inspires all of us to be true to who we are, and to use our voices to create a new reality. One where we are all visible, and we are all valued. I feel lucky to share common ground with her.

Amy Boyd Austin

Director of Collegiate Recovery Community