



F

erene Paris Meyer is the Program Director for the First Year Experience in the Center for Academic Success, and she is so much more.

Ferene joined UVM in 2012 as the Assistant Director of Student Life for Orientation Programs. She successfully managed the coordination of this critical enrollment management program that serves incoming students and their families, and that requires collaboration and strategic planning with academic, administrative, and facilities teams campus-wide. From her earliest days on campus, Ferene has built lasting relationships with students, staff, and faculty and with community members, and in so doing has developed strong professional and personal ties spanning departments and divisions across campus and beyond.

Creating and sustaining any diverse community are active and intentional decisions. Ferene is at the center of that action. Our community is stronger and more thoughtful as a direct result of Ferene's deliberate care for building support networks for those who feel as though our community is exclusive and unwelcoming. It is difficult for anyone to encourage positive change and to make tough statements about race, to call out injustice and do the hard work of recognizing discrimination. It's even tougher as a woman of color. Despite this, Ferene gives all of herself to the UVM community again and again, and does so with compassion and a willingness to share her own personal truths to bear witness to racism in our community. Many people have come to depend on her leadership in this regard.

Ferene acts with measured consistency. Having knit a fabric of support, she pulls us with her as stewards of this stated mission, especially in times "when things have not turned out the way we had hoped" or predicted, when the students we intend to serve step forward in brave ways to indicate how our attempts are not connecting. Integrity, respect, justice, and openness coexist in everything that Ferene commits to and are paramount values in all of her decision making.

On any given day you might find Ferene with her daughters dancing at Rally-a-thon, engaging in social justice conversations, or listening to the lived experience of UVM's women of color at Sisterhood Circle. She even used her physical body and voice to defend men of color choosing to take a knee and raise awareness about racial injustice on the basketball court. Wherever you find her, she is showing up for and in this community.

UVM is a stronger, kinder place because of Ferene.