

February 6, 2020

To whom it may concern,

As a child of two public school teachers, I have developed a deep respect for the task that teachers have chosen to undertake. Teaching is a demanding job that requires extreme patience, selflessness, and kindness. A good teacher must truly have a heart for their students and a desire to see those students succeed both academically and personally. Over my four years as a student at the University of Alabama, I have experienced nearly every teaching style the school has to offer, and I can say with full confidence that Kelley Schoger embodies every single quality of a life-changing teacher.

Due to various conflicts, I was unable to take a class with Kelley until the fall of 2019, when I was a student in her Advanced Movement class. However, I was well aware of her reputation within the Theatre department years before I ever took the class, as every student who had learned from her had nothing but positive things to say. Many of my peers described her as “brilliant,” “a genius,” or even “an angel.” In fact, my primary reason for taking Advanced Movement was to be able to take at least one class with Kelley before I graduated. Looking back, I feel that choosing to enroll in that course was one of the best decisions I ever made at UA, as I experienced tremendous growth as an actor from Kelley’s lessons. Her teaching style is rooted in positivity and exploration, and urges students to push the boundaries of their mind in a safe and encouraging manner. Furthermore, Kelley has an unmatched level of knowledge on the material she teaches, and she is gifted at imparting this technique onto her students. Kelley makes her classes engaging and fun, and I looked forward to her lessons every Tuesday and Thursday.

This semester, Kelley has served as my director in UA Theatre & Dance’s production of *The Servant of Two Masters*, and through this process, I have been able to see just how deeply she cares about her students’ mental health and well-being. For most of my life, I have struggled with intense feelings of insecurity and self-doubt both as a person and a performer, and this semester, those feelings have seemed more prominent than usual. When Kelley was made aware of the fact that I was struggling with these issues, she dropped everything she was doing to make time to talk to me about it. She truly wanted to make sure I was okay, and assured me that I was gifted and valuable in my own unique way, and though personal and professional failures are an inevitable part of life, they should not define me, because I am so much more than them. She helped me to realize that I am enough, and her words of kindness and encouragement have pushed me to pull myself out of these negative feelings and value myself for who I am.

I am eternally grateful for the positive influence that she has been in my life, and if I’m being honest, I would give her every award I possibly could, because she deserves all that and more. Kelley Schoger is the definition of what it means to be a great teacher, and I am so thankful to have learned from her while at UA.

Sincerely,  
Matt Kelley  
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