**Colorado DGK Member Recognized for Excellence in Inclusive Teaching**

Dr. Maxine Fawcett-Yeske, DKG Colorado State Second Vice President and President of Eta Chapter, received the United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) 2020 Award for Excellence in Inclusive Teaching. According to USAFA “The Excellence in Inclusive Teaching Recognition honors one faculty member [from the nearly 525 faculty members at USAFA] for their outstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion in and outside the classroom. Such individuals demonstrate actions that enhance a sense of inclusivity in the classroom, encourage diverse perspectives, foster awareness of diversity issues and promote cultural competence and a global perspective. They advance a classroom climate that is collaborative, welcoming, respectful, and supportive of social and cultural differences.”

Inside the classroom, Dr. Fawcett-Yeske leverages counterfactual and uncoverage pedagogies. Counterfactual thinking suggests to students that there are multiple ways of interpreting an event by posing the question “what if.”[[1]](#footnote-1) With “uncoverage,” students are challenged to find common threads among seemingly disparate ideas. Curriculum theorists Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe assert that uncoverage is the opposite of simply covering the content. Uncoverage develops the skills of inquiry and analysis.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Dr. Fawcett-Yeske’s nomination package for the Excellence in Inclusive Teaching Award included numerous strong letters of support excerpted here, many of which focused on her eight years as Officer-in-Charge (OIC) of the USAFA Cadet Native American Heritage Club (NAHC). As OIC, Dr. Fawcett-Yeske guides cadets to become leaders in their community. She teaches Native arts such as making dreamcatchers and constructing hand drums to the cadets and suggests books and films for them to explore as a group. She involves cadets and accompanies them to national events such as the American Indian Science and Engineering Society Conference, the Tri-Service Native American Heritage Forum, and the Gathering of Nations Powwow, among others. A colleague wrote, “Dr. Maxine Fawcett-Yeske reminds us that some of life’s most meaningful lessons are taught ***outside*** the classroom. Maxine’s leadership of the Native American Heritage Club is noteworthy for many reasons. Maxine is not Native American, yet her love of indigenous people, reverence for their traditions and way of life, and activism for Native causes, garners respect from our cadets, their families, and tribal elders. She quietly and unobtrusively guides the NAHC on their path to make a purposeful impact on their communities.”

A colleague in USAFA Admissions wrote, “Maxine supported my mission to attract and mentor students with several successful outreach events. I depended on Maxine when the Jicarilla Apache nation in Dulce NM, invited the Air Force Academy to a first ever meeting with tribal elders. With Maxine’s guidance, we crafted a presentation by a Native American graduate that resonated well with the over 300 students and teachers learning about the military. Due to her credibility, Maxine was the star of our meetings with the tribal leaders and helped us forge a partnership that supports college-bound Jicarilla Apache students.”

A former cadet wrote, “A person sometimes takes for granted the richness and beauty of what is closest to them. Dr. Maxine allowed me to share and experience my Navajo heritage in a way I did not think possible away from home. She encouraged me to become more fluent in the Navajo language, and she sought out opportunities for me to speak it. I gave the blessing at the National American Indian Heritage lunches at USAFA, spoke at a USAFA Art Gallery opening, and provided the blessing for the DOD American Indian Cultural, Communications, and Consultation Course facilitated by the DOD Senior Advisor and Liaison for Native American Affairs for the Office of the Secretary of Defense. Each event that Dr. Maxine helped facilitate provided me the opportunity to include my grandparents (through language learning) in my USAFA experience and I cannot thank her enough for the time that she has spent in doing so. Each event has help guide and mold me to become the officer I am today.”

Kim Pratt, retired Air Force Lt Col, now Strategic Analyst for the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Pentagon, wrote, “I first met Dr. Fawcett-Yeske at the Joint Services Women's Leadership Symposium in Washington D.C. where I was a speaker on the "Breaking Barriers ... From Then to Now" panel. At this forum, I discussed diversity challenges I encountered as a cadet at USAFA 40 years ago, lessons learned, and the positive changes we have seen in the Air Force since that time. Following the panel, I spoke with Dr. Fawcett-Yeske, and two USAFA cadets about the present diversity and inclusion environment at USAFA, and I was so impressed with the changes I heard about. . . . The Native American Heritage Club environment cultivated by Dr. Fawcett-Yeske allows cadets an environment where they flourish in leadership positions. This issue is personal to me because I am also Native American, and I did not have such a group to belong to when I attended USAFA. What an absolute difference Dr. Maxine Fawcett-Yeske and the NAHC has made at USAFA and in the lives of numerous cadets. Dr. Fawcett-Yeske's expertise in American Indian culture, her high-level of emotional intelligence, and her dedication to serving cadets contribute to the success of the U.S. Air Force Academy, the U.S. Air Force, and United States of America.”

Captions for photos:

\*Photo 1: Maxine Fawcett-Yeske, Ph.D.

\*Photo 2: Native dancers were featured at the event the NAHC hosted at USAFA for National American Indian Heritage Month. USAFA Cadet-in-Charge of the Native American Heritage Club, Cadet First Class Juanita Garcia, is pictured having been taught the hoop dance configuration by the Brad Bearsheart Family Dancers.

1. Scott L. Roberts, “Using Counterfactual History to Enhance Students’ Historical Understanding” *The Social Studies* 102:3 (2011): 117-123. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, *Understanding by Design*, Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision of Curriculum Development, 2005. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)