Peggy Thoits, 2012 Outstanding Faculty Mentor

*Students were impressed by Peggy’s availability & accessibility:*

“When students were having extreme difficulty she met them in the SISR and sat down with them at the computer to work out their research issues. She once said of a student who was having trouble, “I’ll go to the lab and sit elbow to elbow with him to help figure out this issue. If I can’t figure it out then I’ll convert the data to SPSS and then back to Stata.”

*They were also struck by her approachability:*

“Despite the fact that we all knew she is incredibly intelligent and talented, she approaches her students without a hint of pretention, creating a welcoming environment that enables active problem solving.”

“When I met with her on a campus visit, she knew my name and my undergraduate institution immediately. Suddenly, she just seemed like a “regular” person, not some famous sociologist. I was immediately impressed with her not just as a scholar, but as a genuine person. I had decided in my mind that I would like to have someone like her as a faculty mentor.”

*She inspires students to follow in her footsteps:*

“This professor has served as an inspiration and role model to conduct my own research. Her best teaching is through her own examples, and she is not afraid to speak openly about her research process, both the success and the challenges with which she has met.”

“Rather than viewing academia as a competitive realm, she instead seeks to help young researchers hone their craft at every opportunity, as I saw directly with the time and care with which she approached first years’ master’s projects…. In my own career, learning from her, I hope to put other young people in the field first and help them to do well, as she has done.”

“At the end of [a meeting about my academic goals] she said, “When I was in graduate school I would study all the professors and see which one I wanted to be like.” Perhaps before she became a faculty member she had decided that she wanted to be a mentor who encouraged her students to do what they wanted and to be supportive of that choice.”

*Overall, students find her to be an amazing mentor:*

“What separates her from others is her emphasis in carving out an academic career that is true to students’ own interests, passions, and needs…. [This] does not translate into lowered standards. Rather, she is one of the toughest professors in our department; she does not accept mediocre work.”

“The tenor of her mentoring has always been adaptive—sculpted for an individual, in a moment, at a place, with a particular set of challenges, beliefs, and affect. Her open office hours, open door outside of office hours, and open mind has allowed her to reach beyond the veil I have lived behind as an outsider my entire life. Only a special kind of mentoring could have done that.”

“Her expertise, professionalism, kindness, and wit (she’s pretty funny!) have struck me as truly exceptional. Any student who has the opportunity to work under her tutelage has struck gold.”

“I believe that Peggy Thoits deserves recognition for her voluminous contributions to our department. Frankly, she is at a point in her career where (with her endless list of accomplishments) she could feasibly do whatever she wants…. Her mentorship [is] diligent, attentive, and thoughtful…. [and] [w]e are lucky that she has chosen to devote [her] time to teaching and mentoring.”