

- Section 1: Items to Note and Criteria for Team Award
- Section 2: List of Individual Nominees and Submissions

Section 1: Items to Note and Criteria for I AM COD Awards

Award Amounts

Individual Awards (per semester)	Team Awards (per semester, per individual)
\$500.00	\$50.00

Criteria for I Am COD Individual Award

Nominators choose the criterion that best describes why this person is being nominated: *(multiple criteria may be selected)*

Core Values | Service Excellence | Exceptional Performance

Section 2: List of Individual Nominees

Individual (Nominee)	Nominator(s)
Maureen Kies (Access and Accommodations)	Debra Smith (Library)
Kevin Casey (Procurement Services)	Theresa Dobersztyn (Procurement Services)
Lisa Erl (Procurement Services)	Theresa Dobersztyn (Procurement Services)
Eric Frick (Procurement Services)	Theresa Dobersztyn (Procurement Services)
Amber Kalish (Procurement Services)	Theresa Dobersztyn (Procurement Services)
Julie Vranek (Records)	Joseph Latoria (Admissions & Outreach)
Joseph Cahill (Police)	Ana Krstic (Adjunct Faculty Support)
Ashley Gockman (Information Technology)	Susan Kerby (Field & Study Abroad)
Gina Wheatley (Employee Development Center)	Judy Coates (Employee Development Center)

Individual (Nominee)	Nomination Submission
Maureen Kies (Access and Accommodations)	<p>Core Values, Exceptional Performance, Service Excellence</p> <p>Having worked with Maureen Kies for many years and witnessed, firsthand, the creativity, caring, respect, and collaborative nature that she brings to her roles, it is with utter certainty and 100% conviction that I recommend her for an I am COD individual award. I first met Maureen when we served together as advisory members of the Nursing Division's Learning Resource Committee. At that time, Maureen was working in the IT division and provided technology assistance to the Nursing program. As we served together, I was struck by how Maureen always gave her role 100% of her attention and considerable expertise, whether evaluating new technology or software products for the nursing program or supporting the current technology and resource needs of nursing faculty and students. Her comments, feedback, and suggestions were thoughtful, sensitive to the needs of both faculty and students, and often included helpful explanations of the more technical aspects of her responses which were greatly appreciated by those of us on the committee that were not IT experts. It was her collaborative, caring nature, in addition to her professional expertise, that made her such a valued member of the LRC team. Not only did she provide guidance and feedback on the future direction of the Nursing program's electronic resources and IT-related division equipment, but she was also quick to assist with troubleshooting and finding resolution to any issues involving Nursing software, equipment and any Institutional safeguards or security measures that may cause interface issues.</p> <p>When Maureen transitioned to her current position in the Center for Access and Accommodation (CfAaA), my respect for her grew even more as I witnessed the positive impact that she brought to her new area and the students, faculty, and staff that CfAaA served. In addition to being the Librarian Liaison to the Nursing and Health Sciences division, I am also the Library's liaison to students with disabilities. Within the Nursing LRC, Maureen remained on the committee continuing her excellent representation and advisory capacity, except now she placed greater emphasis on accessibility and the needs of the students and faculty requiring accommodation(s). It was awe-inspiring to see how seamlessly she shifted her emphasis and continued to lead and support everyone on the committee by modelling respect, collegiality, professionalism, and, above all, caring and compassion for everyone with whom she came in contact--no matter what role they played or what position they</p>

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	<p>held.</p> <p>Her new role meant that the two of us worked together much more frequently as we “joined forces” and put our heads together to find study solutions for students with disabilities within the Library (whether that be technology needs, spaces, resources, etc). Maureen generously offers her time and talents to assist others succeed. With permission from her Director, Maureen has gone above and beyond her regular job duties by serving as a “consultant” to the Library on several important occasions. She has liaised with me and helped evaluate equipment on the market that will enhance access to resources for all our Library users. For example, she was instrumental in helping us identify and acquire our Optelec machines (devices that magnify and convert text to audio for low or no vision users as well as those in need of alternative viewing/listening modalities). She has advised on tables, lighting, and equipment that enhance accessibility and provide the opportunity for users to study in more diverse environments within our Library’s walls. A few years ago, Maureen was instrumental in helping me and our Library’s Accessible Working Group perform an evaluation of our Library’s physical and virtual spaces, services, and resources that culminated in a Library-wide accessibility report that was then utilized by Library and Institutional administration when reviewing support services for COD’s students and community. I and the entire Library view Maureen as an essential and valued part of our COD team. Her contributions are especially appreciated because not only is she skilled in the field of IT and access and accommodation, but also, she has taught as an adjunct instructor for six years in COD’s OFTI division. She brings the perspective of student, faculty, and staff to everything that she does and that well-rounded perspective is invaluable for those of us who all too often find ourselves “locked in” to only one viewpoint.</p> <p>Her dedication to COD, her colleagues, the community, and, especially, the students that we serve is evident not only in everything that I’ve already written, but also in the fact that Maureen collaborates with COD’s specialized testing area. She assists high school students with disabilities prepare for and take the ACT. But Maureen doesn’t just help students with the ACT, instead, as with every other thing that she does, she makes the most of the opportunity and uses these interactions as a chance to offer these high school students (and frequently their parents) tours of the campus. She takes time to listen to their concerns and answer their questions. She’s been influential in recruiting many local students to come to COD after they talk with her and find out about the supportive, caring, and creative environment and educational setting that COD offers.</p> <p>Maureen Kies is hard-working and self-less. She can be counted on to surpass expectations and offer everyone in her presence an opportunity to be seen, heard, and supported. Without her, COD would not work nearly so well. Many students and colleagues would be without a champion and positive light. I hope that you’ll agree and award this deserving employee with the recognition that she so richly deserves. When I think of the “ideal” COD employee, no one stands out more than Maureen Kies.</p>
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Individual (Nominee)	Nomination Submission
Kevin Casey (Procurement Services)	<p>Service Excellence</p> <p>The Procurement Services Department consists of six (6) non-exempt positions, two (2) of which are currently vacant and my exempt position as the Manager. When employees leave, the work they performed doesn't disappear, it gets picked up by the remaining team members or myself as Manager. Our Buyer Kevin Casey is the longest serving employee in the Procurement Services Department, starting in early September 2020, a few weeks before me. Kevin came to COD with thirty (30) years of public procurement experience as a Buyer for Cook County, the largest County in IL. Kevin is like a well-oiled machine, getting his work completed in the most efficient manner while ensuring that his customer's needs are always met in a timely manner. Kevin consistently goes above and beyond what's expected of his position as Buyer. He regularly logs into work early, stays late when the need arises, even sometimes on his days off, and jumps in to assist as needed, while</p>

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	never complaining. Kevin's work ethic is outstanding as a role model for the department. The Procurement Services Department became a better place when Kevin joined COD in 2020. I am very proud and blessed to have Kevin Casey as a member of the awesome team we have in Procurement Services.
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Individual (Nominee)	Nomination Submission
Lisa Erl (Procurement Services)	<p>Service Excellence</p> <p>In 2025 the Board of Trustees approved the contractual payments to the Illinois Aviation Academy, COD's flight training educational partner for FY26. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the College and the IAA was executed. The time arrived to put everything together in order to process payments due in June prior to the start of the Aviation Program in the new fiscal year. Lisa Erl determined at the end of the work day on a Thursday during summer hours that an approved new Exemption from Bid/RFP Sole Source form was needed that required approval by the CFO as the Agent in Charge for the VP of Administrative Affairs and final approval by the College President. Between late night phone calls, text messages and emails, Lisa led the charge by corralling all of us required to approve the exemption form. By 9:46 p.m. that Thursday evening, I had received the approved Sole Source Exemption Form directly from Dr. Christine Hammond. While we all kept the lines of communication open that evening, Lisa tirelessly stayed in constant contact with me in order to stay in the loop on the form's approval progress. Lisa's dedication to the College and her customers is a testament to her strong work ethic in getting things done in the most efficient manner. So many steps have to happen behind the scenes that our Customers don't even realize what some of us go through in order to make things happen. Lisa is one of those employees that goes above and beyond for her customers in order to make sure that those things happen as they are supposed to, while always smiling when the goal is completed. I am extremely proud and blessed to have Lisa Erl as a dedicated member of the Procurement Services Team.</p>

Individual (Nominee)	Nomination Submission
Eric Frick (Procurement Services)	<p>Service Excellence</p> <p>Eric Frick has been with the Procurement Services Team for over three (3) years now. During this time, Eric has significantly decreased the processing time for both New Vendor Intakes and ESM Purchase transactions. With the implementation of Amazon Marketplace in 2024 as a new punch-out catalog vendor in ESM Purchase, the Amazon usage has skyrocketed dramatically. In 2025 Eric continues to process these transactions daily in the most efficient manner while providing excellent customer service to all of his customers. Sometimes employees can be frustrated or impatient, but Eric is always very professional when dealing with customers of all levels at the College. This demonstrates Eric's ability to work under pressure while always being professional when representing the department with both internal and external customers. Eric is a strong member of the Procurement Services Team who demonstrates service excellence to all of his customers, both internal and external, on a consistent basis. Eric's continued efficiency and professionalism as a high performing employee demonstrates his commitment to providing excellent customer service to everyone he deals with on a daily basis.</p>

Individual (Nominee)	Nomination Submission
Amber Kalish (Procurement Services)	Exceptional Performance

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	<p>Amber was notified that one (1) employee continued to run into ESM Purchase errors for Failed Encumbrances when trying to enter Change Orders to increase Blanket Orders when using multiple General Ledger Accounts. Amber and another Procurement Services Team member tried multiple solutions in order to try and figure out what the problem was. This included a few zoom sessions and even an in-person session in order to view the Requestor's steps when entering the transactions. Amber even tried to replicate the problem with another team member in our office in order to determine if this was a user error or a system error that required the assistance of I.T. Help Desk Support, ESM Customer Solutions Support, or Ellucian Colleague Support. Amber worked tirelessly in order to determine which support department needed to correct these issues. It was finally determined that ESM Solutions was aware of this issue of account splits with multiple general ledger accounts, with an update being released sometime in the near future. In the meantime, it was recommended that all current Blanket Orders be closed with new transactions entered for new Blanket Orders with exact dollar amounts to be split among multiple accounts as needed. This temporary solution would be required until the fix was released by ESM Customer Solutions that would automatically calculate these required account splits. Amber was determined to figure out what the problem was and would not give up until someone provided her with a solution that would finally correct the problem. Amber's persistence demonstrates her commitment to finding solutions to problems in order to successfully meet her customer's needs as efficiently as possible.</p>
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Individual (Nominee)	Nomination Submission
Julie Vranek (Records)	<p>Core Values, Exceptional Performance, Service Excellence</p> <p>The Admissions and Outreach Operations Team would like to give a special shoutout to Julie Vranek for her exceptional performance. Julie consistently showcases our core values and commitment to service excellence at COD through her meticulous work ensuring student records in Colleague are up to date.</p> <p>This accuracy is critical to our operations here in Admissions because proper integration ensures that applications flow smoothly, preventing delays in onboarding communications and helping students move seamlessly through the enrollment process.</p> <p>Julie's expertise has also been invaluable in resolving complex cases, including situations involving twins with shared data and other biodemographic discrepancies. Her honesty, integrity, and deep knowledge of Student Records makes her an indispensable part of COD.</p> <p>Julie, thank you for always going above and beyond for both the Operations Team and the COD community. We appreciate everything you do!</p>

Individual (Nominee)	Nomination Submission
Joseph Cahill (Police)	<p>Service Excellence</p> <p>I want to recognize community service officer Joe Cahill who went above and beyond to assist me with what ended up being a difficult task. I had a stubborn license plate that was not easy to remove or replace. What should have been a small matter, turned into kind of an involved situation that Joe took the time to help me with. He was very patient, professional and had a genuine willingness to assist. His helpful attitude turned what could have been a frustrating experience into a positive one. His dedication and kindness truly reflects a commitment to outstanding community service. I am grateful for the entire COD Police Department but, Joe is truly the best of the best.</p>

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Ashley Gockman (Information Technology)	<p data-bbox="441 253 1062 282">Core Values, Exceptional Performance, Service Excellence</p> <p data-bbox="441 318 1944 570">FS/SA has made a concerted effort over the last year to shift our forms to Etrieve. Our processes for helping faculty proposal experiential courses, for helping faculty/staff apply for Global Education funding, and for having students turn in documents (including liability forms, emergency contact/medical forms, program supplemental applications, travel document forms, and program evaluations) has been greatly enhanced, simplified and managed (for legally required records management) using Etrieve. Some of our workflows are complicated and involved unique set-up processes. Ashley Gockman has been our sole contact for this work since we started. She is detail oriented, timely in responding, extremely knowledgeable, and very creative in thinking outside-the-box for solutions. It is my understanding that Ashley has learned Etrieve on-the-job at COD. She has absolutely gone above and beyond to help us tweak our ideas into something useful, that saves time, hassles, and money, for all constituency groups who interact with our office.</p> <p data-bbox="441 605 1923 662">In our college mission we expect fulfillment of obligations and accountability. Ashley exemplified this. As noted with examples above, she provides excellent service and exceptional performance and is very deserving of being recognized for her contributions to COD.</p>
Individual (Nominee)	Nomination Submission
Gina Wheatley (Employee Development Center)	<p data-bbox="441 748 1062 777">Core Values, Exceptional Performance, Service Excellence</p> <p data-bbox="441 813 1986 1000">Gina is a true advocate for the College. While telling employees about the College is part of her role, the extent and enthusiasm with which she does it should be recognized. - Gina sends a welcome email to new employees of the College inviting them to participate in various new employee activities. If applicable she either invites them to an in-person New Employee Experience (NEE) or is sure to point them in the direction of available online orientation. She has adjusted the Campus Walking Tour, Portal Tour and Library tour to be available to ALL new employees, not just those attending the in-person NEE. This fall she was excited and proud to have new Full Time Faculty join the session. Gina's approach is inclusive, and all employees are welcomed.</p> <p data-bbox="441 1005 1944 1094">- When delivering these events Gina is sure to mention all the total rewards, perks and benefits available to employees. She shares her first-hand experience with Automotive Services, Cosmetology Services, and Continuing Ed Youth Camps, pointing out how accessible each of the benefits is. Her enthusiasm is off the charts! You can't help but get excited with her!</p> <p data-bbox="441 1099 1986 1188">- This year she has enhanced the in-person NEE by including three panels: Cabinet members, new employees telling their first-year story, and a safety panel with our Title IX Coordinator, COD Police and EHSR. She is always adjusting the programming to fit the changing needs of new employees and keep the content fresh.</p> <p data-bbox="441 1193 1902 1282">- Gina connects with the College outside of her role. She participates in campus events, COD Center events, and uses COD services. She participates in the COD Speakers Bureau as a representative of the College. She shares her experiences with employees and community members alike.</p> <p data-bbox="441 1318 1482 1382">Ask any new employee who has attended NEO or NEE in the past 13 years – Gina is a role model of a Culture of Caring. Thank you, Gina, for being such a strong advocate for the College.</p>