



2010 National Alternative Break Awards
Staff Person of the Year
Melody Porter

Nominator: Sarah VanDine, Maggie Ryan, Mallory Johnson (Branch Out Alternative Break Student Directors)

Background: As the Assistant Director of the Office of Community Engagement and Scholarship, Melody oversees the Alternative Break Program which includes Spring Break National trips, weekend Regional trips, and International trips.

Highlights:

- In the past two years of working at the College of William & Mary, Melody has been instrumental in reorganizing the campus' large and widespread service trips to a shared overall program called "Branch Out" - with a student led executive board, intensive and more uniform year-long training, and increased funding to support this stronger core.
- Was integral in instituting a new funding policy for all 33 trips, which allocates money based on need-based financial aid - catching the attention and support of the University President and Vice President. Ultimately, this restructuring allowed Branch Out to reframe the fundraising strategy on student need and connect efforts to University priorities - raising 20% more funds in the process.
- Wrote and designed a workbook on the key components of alternative breaks and integrated the Active Citizen continuum into every element of the office.
- Demonstrated full support for the program by participating on five service trips in 2009-2010: Tanzania, Honduras, Virginia (2), and Philadelphia.
- Melody has emerged on campus as an advocate and expert in issue education – speaking on panels, conducting workshops and trainings, presenting to community associations and at regional, and international conferences, as well as writing extensively on the influence of alternative breaks on student learning and community development. She was recently selected to be one of the University bloggers - a forum she uses to write about what students learn through alternative breaks and how community partners educate students.
- She has worked extensively with the student leadership to build the program's effectiveness in helping to foster social change: she helped Branch Out International student directors develop a new curriculum for team leaders; supported Branch Out National Site Leaders to grow the program exponentially over the past several years; and Regional trips have become more cohesive and effective with her guidance.

“Melody is able to maintain professionalism, but has the uncanny ability to balance being both task and people-oriented. Her enthusiasm is contagious and she is clearly passionate about every facet of her work. She truly believes in the mission of the alternative break program at William and Mary and continuously goes above and beyond to ensure their success. Her deep commitment to service and social justice, dexterity in organizing and managing projects, and strong sensibility for leadership and interpersonal relationships has made her an unprecedented friend, colleague, and mentor.”